PuiPui Volume1

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These are the novel illustrations that were included in volume 1

夏緑（なつ・みどり）

小説『風水学園』『風水少女』シリーズ（MF文庫J）、漫画原作『獣医ドリトル』（小学館）、科学読本『遺伝子・DNAのひみつ』（童心社）など、涙こらえて書いてます。
メイドカフェも可愛くていいですが、高級フルコースを出すロッテンマイヤーさんカフェがあったらぜひ行きたい。テーブルマナーを逐一びしばし叱られたいです。うっとり。

◎なもり
富山県出身、名古屋在住。6月25日生まれ。
飽いだけで生きてる大学生。
漫画も描きます。
代表作『リセットな彼女』（ファミ通文庫）
公式HP『ELEGY SYNDROME』
http://www.geocities.jp/elegy_syndrome/

カバーイラスト／なもり　装丁／石松望

夏緑
Natsu Midori

ぷいぷい！

MF文庫 J
な-01-17

ぷいぷい！

夏緑

580

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メディアファクトリー

ぷいぷい！

学生寮に暮らす高校一年生・新木陣が、考古学者の両親から送られてきた荷物の中にあったランプを磨くと……突然、学園の人気者・座堂シエラが現れた！しかもメイド服で!!　あとから現れた彼女の父親によると、なんとシエラはランプの魔神の末裔で、ご主人様の願いを叶えて一人前の魔神にならないといけないのだという。新米魔神なのでまだ魔法が使えないくせに気が強いシエラの闖入で、女の子が苦手な陣の暮らしは喧騒に包まれることに。わがままお嬢様の新米魔神・シエラとむりやりご主人様にされた陣のファンタジックな学園ストーリー！

MF文庫 J 夏緑の本

葉緑宇宙艦テラリウム1～3
【イラスト：okama】

風水学園1～8　【イラスト：凪良】

風水学園えくすとら 風の巻
【イラスト：凪良】

風水学園えくすとら 水の巻
【イラスト：凪良】

風水少女1～3　【イラスト：南方純】

ぷいぷい！　【イラスト：なもり】

ぷいぷい！

夏緑

ぷいぷい！

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ぷいぷい！

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Natsu Midori

ぷいぷい！　目次

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座堂シエラ

「呼び出しなさいって言ったでしょ！」

美貌と裕福さで学園中の憧れなのだが、実はランプの魔神の家系の末裔。なぜか陣の召使いをすることに……。しかも超猫っかぶり。

新木陣

「変人で悪かったな」

考古学にどっぷりはまった両親に影響されて自分も秘宝を探している。そのせいか女性にあまり興味がない。細いわりに結構大食漢。

宇多田夕也

「たまには人の話を聞けよっ！」

陣の橘寮のルームメイト。陣の変人さ加減にあきれつつも仲がいい。軽音楽部に入っていて、ラジオの音楽番組を聴くのが趣味。

近衛右京

「その軟派な根性、叩き直してやろうか！」

陣たちが暮らす男子寮の寮長。春紗学園高等部生徒会長で剣道部主将も務めている。硬派だが実はこっそりシエラに憧れているらしい。

アルフ・シャムシール

「たらふく食ってまるまる太りな♪」

ペルシャ料理店のオテンバな看板娘。可愛い容姿とは裏腹に、どうやら陣のことを“美味しそう”と見つめている謎な一面が……。

氷室江利子

「メ、メガネメガネ……」

高等部生徒会副会長。シエラの猫っかぶりを女の勘で見破るが、誰にも信じてもらえず、証拠捜しに躍起。弱点はメガネ（たぶん）。

ニコライ・パブロフ

「理想のタイプがミイラか何かなのでしょう」

座堂家の執事でシエラのお抱え運転手。シエラに急接近した陣のことが気がかりながら、執事として一歩引いて見守っている青年。

メアリー・サバント

「大英帝国の誇りにかけて！」

メイド長。厳格で清楚なメイドの中のメイド。同じ座堂家に仕える身として、ロシア系執事のニコライにライバル意識を持っている。

香住愛花

「愛花、ドンくさくなんかないもん！」

陣の実家の近所に住んでいた女の子。陣を追っかけて同じ学園の中等部に入学、女子寮に入ってきた。もちろんドンくさい娘です。

本田聡子

「また図書館を利用してくださいね。ククク…」

中高共用図書室の図書委員。貸し出し記録を全て把握しているらしく、考古学趣味のある陣のことを意識している。……のか？

氷室啓太

「姉の威をかさに着る気はありません！」

橘寮から中等部に通っている。真面目な優等生で、見た目と違って融通の利かない頑固な少年。右京のことを尊敬している。

ぷいぷい!

夏緑

MF文庫
J

Chapter 1: To Become A Master

A refreshing spring breeze blew across the wide river's surface. Beneath the warm sun of pleasant late April, the running water shimmered like a curtain of light.

The green grass that lined the banks gently swayed in the wind. On the road above, a high-class convertible sparkled in the light as it drove past.

Sitting in the back seat of the convertible, wearing the high school uniform of Harusha Private Academy, was Zadou Sierra of class 1-B. While her long silky hair fluttered in the spring breeze, the way she sat with her delicate hands placed gently upon her knees as if she were made of glass was very modest, as if she were a girl kept in isolation. Her large eyes partially concealed by long lashes, her expression was daydreamish with a peaceful smile gracing her lips.

The driver was wearing a black jacket with a hat pulled low over his eyes. Next to Sierra, a middle school girl sat with a tense facial expression.

"Is...Is it really alright for me to be riding in Sierra-sama's car like this?"

"Of course. Is your leg feeling better yet?"

Sierra smiled sweetly. With a smiling face like a blooming flower, her inner friendliness, undeniable elegance, and grace came forth.

"Yeah...or rather, it's just a scrape..."

The school girl looked down at the adhesive bandage stuck to her knee, sounding rather apologetic.

"Negligence is forbidden. It would be a problem if you overdid a little injury thinking it was nothing and it became serious."

"B-but, I'm sorry for making Sierra-sama take me, and I feel sorry for everyone in class."

"Everyone in class?"

"Because, Sierra-sama is admired by everyone..."

"Okay, then please. Take it as this upperclassman's selfishness and let me take you, okay?"

Sierra put both of her hands together, staring fixedly at her as if entreating the school girl to comply. The girl started to blush fiercely.

"Ah, Uhm, uhm, uhm, uhm..."

While clearly flustered, the school girl shrugged her shoulders shyly, finally answering in a small voice,

"Y-Yes...please do."

"Good. Then, please just relax. Would you like a pastry ?"

Sierra reached into a velvet box, pulling out a high-class chocolate truffle. The girl, however, was clutching her racing heart as she instead became more nervous and her face flushed an even deeper red.

Sierra's car continued along the road, while on the embankment below.....Araki Jin, in his school uniform, was lying down amidst the tall swaying grass. His clearly determined eyes and taut, well-tanned skin gave off a sort of hot and dry impression, like that of the desert wind.

As Jin used his school bag as a pillow, he read an archaeology book held closely to his lips. It contained pictures of a clay tablet with wedge-shaped characters engraved on it.

Utada Yuuya, Jin's classmate, also sat nearby. His skin and hair were weak in color, while he had a thin, frail frame. He wore headphones over his ears, with his slender eyes narrowed as he absentmindedly listened to the music.

"Ah.....it's the Zadou's car."

Sierra's car continued driving on, while Yuuya blinked in an unfocused manner, muttering in happiness.

"Aaah, such a secluded young woman..... She lives on a completely different level in this world, and there are a great deal of people who want to confess to her, but she's like that flower on the top of a mountain, oh how bittersweet."

"Ehh. Beautiful flowers can grow from plants on high mountains."

Jin's gaze was directed at his book, so he only responded in a simple manner. Yuuya lifted his

eyebrows like the katakana character 'ノ', and took his headphones off of his ears, resting them around his neck.

"Flower on a high cliff, you don't even get it! We're talking about Zadou Sierra here."

"The name of this flower sure sounds like a human."

"You're slow and you're only making a shallow point. Zadou is a beauty and a celebrity who's very kind, she's a flawless Ojou-sama. Everyday, guys at the academy talk about how they want to confess to her, but since they're too scared to confess, they can only admire her from afar. Isn't it unbelievable that you don't know her?"

"My shoulder's been hurting since yesterday. Wonder what I should do."

So, without caring, Jin rubbed his left shoulder. He hadn't listened at all to the speech; Yuuya was stunned.

"Someone's talking here! Besides, it's because you read books all the time, that's why your shoulder's hurting. You're like an old man."

"It's near the collarbone, and it feels like there is a chestnut in there grinding heavily."

"That's an inflamed lymph node you know..... hey, why are promising students like us talking about such a depressing topic?"

"Yesterday, my shoulder finally reached an intolerable level. It felt like parasites underneath my skin were eating my flesh."

"How can you say that with such a calm expression? Surely it's because they come from inside the books stacked around our room. No joke, I've actually been hearing some rustling sounds at night as well. Don't you think it would be better if you went to the hospital?"

"Hnn..... This cuneiform seems to be written in the Sumer writing style."

"You're not listenin' to me again!"

"If you do that, then these symbols make.....S-L-M-N... .....Solomon?! Perhaps this clay tablet holds the key to ' Solomon's Treasure'?"

"What are you talking about Solomon's Treasure for?"

"I'm going back to my room, there's some stuff I want to check on."

Yuuya's words went unheeded as Jin stood up, grasped the book in his hands, and ran along the embankment path. Yuuya became confused as Jin had left his bag behind.

"Hey! Wait a minute! You forgot your bag!"

But Jin never heard those words. Half wanting to give up, Yuuya nevertheless picked up both their school bags, clutching them to his chest as he chased after Jin.

Jin traveled one kilometer from the academy in order to reach Harushiya Academy's male dormitory, " Tachibana." The two-story dormitory gave off an old, historic feel, as the roof was built with wooden roof tiles. Each room was set up so that two people from the same year would board together. Jin and Yuuya were roommates.

Their room had a bunk bed, an old-fashioned desk, and mountains of books burying cardboard boxes; so many that there wasn't even enough room to put one's feet on the ground. Digging into the mountain of boxes and books, Jin was searching for something.

"Well then..... it must be buried somewhere around here."

"This is just like excavating."

Yuuya had just about given up after going through and classifying a bunch of books underneath the bunk bed.

"Geez.....this room should be a place to relax."

"Ah, found it. The reference book to the Sumer characters....."

Jin gave a big pull on one book in the center of a mountain of books. The mountain of books swayed and wobbled, before tumbling on top of Yuuya.

"Gaaaah! It's an avalanche of booooks!"

Underneath the bunk bed, books had piled up. Jin ignored the "Ah", and without doing anything special, expressionlessly pulled a book out from under the bed.

"Hey, are you alive?"

As he extracted the book, a cloud of dust was released. Crawling out from inside the dust cloud, Yuuya coughed .

"Move it! By the way, where did all these boxes even come from! The only way they could have entered this dorm, is one by one."

Yuuya's body continued to struggle with the dust. But as Yuuya grew angrier, Jin, at his own pace, looked around the inside of the room without any emotion on his face.

"Even if you say that.....all of these are important reference books."

"Then you should at least organize them!"

"I don't know about that. You think after they're organized, they wouldn't fall around like this?"

"It wouldn't be this bad if you had organized them!"

In Yuuya's madness, he pushed Jin's face down into the pile of books.

"I can't take it anymore! I can't live in a room like this!"

Yuuya picked up from the top of the desk, and held in his hand a small gadget.....an MP3 Player, and after moving his headphones from around his neck, he stormed out into the corridor with heavy footsteps.

This normally calm and carefree guy was seriously upset.

"I'm going to the lounge, so you have one hour to organize this room. If you don't, I'm going to take a bunch of your things that are against the dormitory rules to the dorm supervisor and have a nice chat with him."

"How can you even make that kind of horrible joke?"

"You think I care! Forget about that, and hurry up with the sorting!"

Slaam! Yuuya had forcefully closed the door behind him. A bit thickheaded, all Jin could do was tilt his head to the side.

"What a weird guy. Why's he so mad?"

Jin lifted his gaze to the mountain of books. There was no way to clean all of this in an hour.

"Well.....for now I'll just do what I can. If I'm kicked out of here, I don't have any place to go..."

Slowly, Jin began opening the cardboard boxes. Inside, there were things like Arabic newspapers, clay pots, and fragments of pottery. Looking at all of that, Jin began to feel very tired.

"Haah. So Dad and the others didn't even try to organize any of it.....Anyway, I'll start by separating things I need and don't need, and then I'll throw out the junk....."

Jin took out the newspapers from inside the boxes, spreading them out in stacks and tying them with cord into bundles. However, even while steadily tying the newspapers into an increasing number of bundles, the

cardboard boxes did not seem to diminish. Even before he started with this tedious work, Jin had already been somewhat tired.

"......Geez, why do I have to keep doing this?"

Jin kicked a nearby box into the air. After the cardboard box collapsed on landing, the contents spilled out into the room. Amongst the fragments of broken earthenware and bricks, there lay a dully shining golden object. The strange metallic vessel looked like a water pitcher with an attached leg.

"Hm……?"

Jin went ahead and picked it up.

Around the same time, Sierra had gone to the woman's dormitory, called "Sakura Dormitory," to drop off the middle school girl, after which she returned to her home.

Sierra's house was located in a very exclusive residential area, and was a quite noticeably large, stately

mansion. Ten-thousand square meters had been used as the site for the construction of the large home. In the back of the property, there was a large tennis court, pool, and even a rose garden where exquisite flowers bloomed.

The automatic gate opened with the approach of the car. Just then, from within the mansion ten maids came flying out, rolling out a red carpet in welcome.

"A most welcome return, Ojou-sama!"

The employees in the mansion were all live-in workers . The maids wore lengthy, deep blue apron dresses with black tights, and wore loafers for footwear, while a headdress was affixed to the hair.....the maid's uniform was old-fashioned and quite reserved. Circling the car as Sierra exited, they took her school bag.

"Now then, I will put the car into the garage. Until next time."

The driver bowed his head deeply. Giving an elegant smile, Sierra also bowed her head.

"Okay, Nikolai. Thank you for your hard work every day."

"Not at all. It is for Ojou-sama's sake."

The driver then took the car and brought it into the spacious garage by the side of the mansion. In the garage , some ten other high grade automobiles were parked. As Sierra walked atop the red carpet, the maids followed, rolling up the carpet as they went. The maids were all addressing Sierra in unison.

"You must be quite tired. Would you like an afternoon snack?"

"Thank you. I am alright for now."

"Is there any homework that you may have?"

"For home economics, my homework is to hand in an embroidered handkerchief."

"Understood. Then we shall call the world class designer from Paris shortly."

"Paris.....that reminds me, how is Mother?"

Just then Sierra passed through the entry way to the mansion. The entry hall also had red carpeting, reaching up to the large stairwell. Along either side of the red

carpet, another twenty maids and employees were lined up.

"A most welcome return, Ojou-sama!"

Said within the interval of a second, there had been no one off mark, as the twenty people spoke and bowed their heads in unison. After ascertaining that her mother was not within the arrayed group, Sierra inquired again.

"Mary. Is Mother still shopping in Paris?"

"She isn't. Today she went to watch an opera..... she took the private jet when she left."

The head maid, Mary Savant, was respectfully bowing her head. Older than the other maids, she still had the appearance of being in her twenties, and her movements had the standard elegance of an Englishwoman, with no flaws in their perfection.

"What about Father?"

"He is in his room."

"I see. He's probably busy earning "money" again."

Huffing, Sierra took a deep breath. Within a moment, her expression returned to that of a big smile. However, Mary didn't miss the change.....realizing, but pretending not to have noticed, she maintained a poker face with her response.

"Ojou-sama, would you like to have some afternoon tea?"

"Eh?.....no, why do you ask me?"

Not sure why Mary would want her to take tea, Sierra could only tilt her head to the side in puzzlement. Seeing the maids off, Sierra started up the great staircase. At the top of the large staircase, the driver from earlier was waiting and, having taken off the black coat and hat, now wore a tailcoat.

"A most welcome return, Ojou-sama."

He, Nikolai Pavlov, was the Zadou House's butler. Even though he was a butler, he was only in his twenties, and had an appearance that was tall and thin, with firm shoulders. He gave off an icy feel with his glinting blue eyes and platinum blond hair.

Standing atop the stairwell, Nikolai had not missed observing Sierra's thoughts and had seen her hasty smile.

"Ojou-sama. Are you at all tired?"

"No, but I should be saying that to you.....I apologize for having you make another stop today. Looking after Father's health must also be very tiring."

"Not at all. Being a driver is a job that I enjoy very much after all."

As Sierra headed towards her room, Nikolai followed along at her pace. Sierra's emotions were weaving.

"Why are you following, Nikolai?"

"I had assumed it was Ojou-sama's intention that I should follow."

"I didn't really mean that....."

"Ah.....then I deeply apologize. It's a course of upbringing."

Nikolai, in a small movement, quickly bowed his head.

"By the way, Ojou-sama.....would you like some Russian Tea?"

"Mary also tried to give me some tea. Do you really want me to drink tea that much?"

"April's winds are still known to be quite cold."

Nikolai had tried to modestly hide from view his facial expression. However, Sierra had noticed his worry for her.

"That's true. Well then.....I will gladly have some."

Sierra's expression changed. After confirming that, Nikolai bowed his head very deeply.

"Well then, I shall put the charcoal in the Samovar Teakettle."

With that, Sierra turned back to her room.

The room was like an ultra high-class Hotel Suite in all its splendor. It had a bedroom and a living room, where in the bedroom was a queen sized bed with a canopy,

while in the living room there were three one-hundred inch plasma screen TV's. One was for television, another for games, and a third for videos.

Sierra tossed herself down on the sofa in front of the TV, staring absent-mindedly up at the ceiling. It was boring, with nothing to do. She thought about how she hadn't seen her parent's faces all week.

"Father, Mother....."

Facing up, she realized she was crying. Sierra quickly sat upright on the couch, rubbing her eyes with the back of her hand.

Suddenly, something strange happened. Looking at her hand, Sierra noticed an unfamiliar white glove.

"Huh? When.....did I, put on a glove?"

At that instant, Sierra's entire body was swallowed by a golden light.

Nikolai, with a silver Samovar Teakettle from the Romanov Dynasty, and a porcelain tea set, was pushing them down the corridor on top of a cart.

"Ojou-sama, excuse my impoliteness."

Nikolai knocked on Sierra's door. But, no reply came.

"......Ojou-sama. Sierra Ojou-sama?"

He called again, but there still was no reply. Pushing gently, he opened the door. Inside the room, strewn about atop the sofa, was a school uniform and a pair of shoes. It looked as if a body had simply vanished from within the clothes, while in the middle of sleep.

"It seems the uniform was removed. Well, that must mean....."

Nikolai turned his gaze to face the inner shower room. His normally stark white face, turned bright red.

"M-My most humblest of apologies!"

Nikolai hurriedly flew back into the corridor. He had thought Sierra was taking a shower. Rushing out, he caught his foot on the cart, smacking his face on the cart as he collapsed.

"......Mister Pavlov, what are you doing?"

In the middle of patrolling the mansion to supervise the maids in their work, Mary had stopped to inquire while glancing down suspiciously at Nikolai, who looked like a car-squashed frog lying on the floor. Sierra was nowhere to be found.

Sierra was in an unfamiliar room.

Dust was piled on a great deal of old books, and there were boxes of bowls and heaps of newspapers.

"Wha, what is this...some kind of warehouse? How did I, come to this kind of place?"

"Y...you, who are you?"

Sierra turned her surprised eyes towards the bewildered voice. She was met with flashing eyes, which belonged to Jin. In front of him, a dull golden container in the shape of an water pitcher tumbled away.

"Y-You're, Araki Jin! Why, are you here?"

"Why you ask, this is my room!"

"Eh...your room? W-Why...?"

"By the way, how come you know my name?"

"What was that? We're in the same class, so it's obvious right?"

"Eh....the same class?"

"No way, you don't know me? Me?"

"I transferred here from another high school, that's why."

"That's not the problem! April is over and yet you still don't know the names of the girls in your same class? I mean, how does someone in the academy not know me?"

Sierra angrily slapped her hand against her hip, then suddenly narrowed her eyes.

"......Ah, I see. This must mean, your eyes are bad? I thought it was strange. It's because you can't see me, that's why you're not making a fuss. Then it's agreed."

"Nope. Both my eyes are one/five."

"Hah? What's that, I don't believe it!"

"Why, when my eyes are so good, are you getting so mad. By the way, who are you really?"

"They're plain clothes, but when you look at this uniform, you still don't understand?"

"Uniform? It's okay but, our school prohibits part-time work."

"Part-time work? You, ever since before you've been saying things that I don't understand."

"But, isn't that an Akiba Maid uniform?"

"Maid you say!? Even suggesting that I would ever be a maid is the biggest insult ever! Now apologize!"

Angrily facing Jin, Sierra glanced at her hands and became shocked. On her hand, she wore a white glove. Realizing something also felt different about her hair, Sierra lifted her hand to the top of her head. A lace headdress was pinned in her hair.

"W.....what is this?"

Losing her calm, Sierra looked down at her body. She was wearing a mini apron dress, with long knee socks. There was also a mini skirt, just revealing her white bottom. Normally Sierra was a very conservatively dressed Ojou-sama, so wearing the mini skirt caused her to blush a deep scarlet. She tried to pull tighter with both hands and managed to conceal her bottom a bit more.

"What's.....with these clothes! Why am I wearing maid clothes!?"

"Idiot, you're too loud! After coming here, do you want everybody around to see you?"

"Besides caring if someone sees, why am I even here, I have no idea how I got here myself!"

"Stop yelling so loud! In this dorm, the rules are that no girls or pets are allowed. If they find you, I'll get evicted."

"I...don't compare me to an animal! I didn't realize until just now, but I've had enough of your impoliteness! "

"I said your voice is too loud!"

"Could I request of you a little manners?"

"I'm begging you, please lower your voice."

"Will you do something for me?"

"If I can do it."

"Then die apologizing!"

"Sorry but, I think that exceeds the limits of what I'm capable of."

Jin said this in a harsh voice, devoid of emotion.

"Anyway, before somebody sees you, hurry up and get out of here."

"Until you die apologizing, I'm not moving."

Sierra seated herself in traditional Japanese style, with her face looking straight forward.

"Geez. Seriously, just give me a break."

Shifting impatiently, Jin finally accepted it and dropped his shoulders. Quickly, Sierra jabbed her finger at Jin.

"Guess there's no helping it, then I'll forgive you if you commit seppuku."

"That's not even different from earlier. You're so selfish , what kind of '-sama' are you?"

"Zadou Sierra-sama!"

"That's a pretty straight reply.....Wait, Zadou? Maybe it's, the one from the same class?"

Jin remembered what Yuuya had been talking about back at the embankment. Somehow having heard some of it, he recalled, they had been talking about an Ojou-sama.

"Isn't that what I said a while ago! Do you actually have a brain in that head of yours?"

"Well. It's just that you, differ from what I thought an Ojou-sama was."

"What was that?"

"It's just that, I didn't think an Ojou-sama would have such a bad mouth."

"None of your business! Acting like a friendly cat is too bothersome!"

"So they dress up in costumes, huh...It's a world beyond my understanding."

"Idiot, acting like a cat is a metaphor. As a commoner, is that beyond your understanding?"

"It's just, you're wearing Akiba type clothes, it's cosplay right?"

Taken aback, Sierra dropped her gaze to her clothes, covering herself with both arms.

"I forgot.....I was wearing maid clothes."

Standing up in sudden fury, Sierra began fervently scanning the inside of the room.

"Where's the exit? Someone like me wearing maid clothes, if someone I knew came into this common room of yours, it would be the embarrassment of a lifetime!"

"Sorry for it being so common."

"I'd be so shocked, I'd probably die!"

"Well, I think I'd be the first one to go. I already feel like I'm about to die."

"Instead of grumbling, hurry up and tell me how to get out!"

"So nobody will see you when you leave, you'll have to exit through the window."

Jin pointed towards the window. With the window open wide, dust was blowing up from the books.

"What floor is this?"

"The second floor..."

"......There's no helping it then."

Pressing her lips tightly together, Sierra put her leg on the window. To Jin's astonishment, Sierra concentrated with her arms held at her back.

"Oi, you serious? The second floor is actually quite high."

"It's better than being embarrassed!"

"Yeah but everyone has something they're embarrassed about."

"Speaking of which, what's with your hand?"

Jin had crossed his hands in front of Sierra, holding her tight. He was dazed.....as her body was unbelievably soft for being so thin. Taking that chance, Sierra moved to the window and prepared to exit, when she felt something similar to an electric shock, which resulted in her falling back into the room with a loud crash.

"Kyaaa!!"

Sierra tumbled, landing with her bottom on top of the floor. Her skirt lifted up revealingly, and the flustered

Sierra hastily pressed it down, sitting in traditional Japanese style. Kneeling next to Sierra, Jin wondered what had happened.

"Is it, fun to play by yourself?"

"W-Why couldn't I get outside?"

Sierra feverishly began scanning the room. Finding a door, she ran towards it. Confused, Jin could only stay still.

"Oi, wait, people will see you if you go into the corridor!"

Sierra grabbed the doorknob with her hand. But, again the same electric shock ran through her hand. Grimmacing, she looked at her hand. Why couldn't she even open the door?

"Why....."

At that moment, pouring out from the water pitcher's spout, a violet smoke was rising upwards.

"Kyaa, it's poison gas!"

Sierra grabbed onto Jin, terrified. He gave a painful grimace.

The violet smoke began to take on the form of a human. A man wrapped in a red silk gown, holding a brandy glass in one hand, was spinning upwards. Wearing a ring on one finger, a necklace, and an earring, Jin's eyes reflected all the sparkling jewelry.

"Wh.....what's with this flashy old guy?"

Still hanging onto Jin, Sierra's voice was filled with disbelief.

"Fa.....Father?"

"Eh, your father?"

Understanding less and less, Jin furiously rubbed his eyes.

"So your fashion sense, it's hereditary?"

"I'm not wearing the maid set because I like it! That and, what's some commoner doing, being so overly familiar!"

Sierra was flushed deep red, as she thrust Jin forcibly aside. Pushed aside, Jin just raised his eyebrows.

"Obviously, I wasn't the one touching you right?"

Picking up the water pitcher, and with a friendly expression, Sierra's father extended his hand out to Jin.

"So, you're the new master huh. I'm counting on you."

"Wha.....? Is it because of my weak understanding, that I have no idea what you just said?"

With all his strength, Jin glared hard at Sierra's father. Sierra was doing the same, as she snapped.

"What the heck are you saying that for, father! Bowing your head to a commoner, I can't believe it!"

Sierra's father, wagging his index finger back and forth , showed Sierra the water pitcher.

"Sierra, do you have any idea what this is?"

"It's a pot used to make curry sauce."

"Ah. So that was the name of the thing you put curry into."

A hand slapped Jin from behind. Sierra was moving around, with scornful eyes.

"It's because a commoner doesn't have one in his house , that's why you don't know it's real name."

"Quit with the commoner thing! Even I know that the word for the ladle you use with shredded ice is called a ' kanrojyakushi'.

"Shredded ice you say? Ah, how distasteful. The upper class term is a frappe."

"Regardless, how did a parent and child like you get into this dorm?"

"It's not a pot to make curry sauce. This, is a lamp," Sierra's father said. Without interest, Jin gave a weak acknowledgment.

"I see, like a lamp that has a flame."

"It doesn't have a flame."

"Then it's just junk."

"It doesn't have a flame, but the lamp does have a genie."

Sierra's father had drawn very close to Jin's face, speaking in a serious tone. For a word like that, it took Jin a while to have it register in his brain.

".....right now, listen to this strange story."

So, Jin used a finger to clear his ears. Sierra had also anxiously turned her eyes towards her father.

"Father.....what will you do if there are losses in your share trading?"

"Sierra. Until now, why is it that I never had to go to work to earn money.....it's different than the explanation about trading stocks."

"Eh? Father, you weren't buying and selling stocks on the internet?"

"The things in our house, the white personal jet, all of these I used magic to make them appear!"

Sierra's father beat his own chest. For several seconds, both Jin and Sierra were completely silent.

".....But even so, the official name has to be 'curry pot.' "

"'Kanrojyakushi' I didn't know that one....."

"Oi, Oi, Oi! Don't leave me out!"

Grabbing Sierra's back, her father turned her around.

"The Genie of the Lamp really does come out, just like in 'Arabian Nights.' As a part of our family heritage, the Zadou House has the blood of that Genie of the Lamp!"

"Eeeh."

"I'm serious! The Genie of the Lamp, using magic, can make all sorts of things appear!"

"Yeah, I see. It's just like Papa says."

"Don't stare at me with such a pitiable expression!"

"That's because, who could believe something like that ?"

"But it's true! The abilities of a Genie of the Lamp are handed down to the next generation. And when the next generation finds their "master", the parents lose their abilities."

"Master?"

Sierra's face stiffened as she turned her eyes towards Jin. He was taken aback, as Sierra's father pointed at the lamp in his possession.

"Then maybe.....that's a magic lamp?"

"What slow comprehension..."

"Yeah but, I was just cleaning my room."

"But you rubbed the lamp at that time?"

"That's because it was dirty."

"Then that's why you are officially Sierra's Master."

"I don't believe it! Why do I have to be the servant of this commoner!"

Sierra's father turned her around with the flat of his palm,

"Sierra. Put you hand in your apron's pocket."

He said, while pointing at her pocket. Thrusting her hand into her pocket, Sierra pulled out a thin book, resting it on her palm. She blinked in surprise.

"This book, what is it?"

"It's a magic tome which has been handed down in our family for generations. It seems you are a magic maid."

The front cover of the book had the design of an arabesque of the Arabian Wind, while the inside was blank. Turning the pages, Sierra knit her eyes in confusion.

"There's nothing written here."

"Because the ability of the Genie of the Lamp transferred to you, the magic book I was holding moved to your working clothes, where at that moment, all the information stored was reset. As you level up, the skill of your magic will increase. And when you reach the status

of a full-fledged Genie of the Lamp, you will be released from your Master, and will no longer have to wear your working outfit, and you will be able to always keep the magic book with you."

"Level up?"

"So make sure you fulfill all of the wishes of this boy's heart."

"W.....why, does someone like me have to do that!"

"I refuse as well, don't force your own selfishness on someone to be some kind of servant. The rules of this dorm are really strict, people can't have too many personal possessions around, and women and pets aren't allowed here."

Desperately, Sierra was glaring at Jin.

"That's what's rude! Comparing me and pets on the same level!"

"Well I'll get evicted if I break any of the rules!"

"Father, I can't even believe you'd want me to work for this rude commoner!"

"You have become a magic maid have you not?"

"I don't want to be some kind of maid who uses magic for any length of time! Let's go home!"

With her feet making loud stomping noises, Sierra began to leave the room. But, Sierra's father grabbed her by the nape of her neck, pulling her back to her place.

"Wait wait wait, just wait a moment! Because you haven't used magic yet, it could be troublesome!"

"What is it. There's no need for magic, we can buy anything with the money we have."

"That-is-why! That money, all of it was conjured by magic!"

"Eh!"

Sierra's face was in the prime of utter fury. As she stood dumbfounded, her father just nodded his head at her.

"Looks like you finally get it."

"So.....you can't use magic anymore which means, there is no money anymore?"

"As of this minute, it's over."

"Nooo! S.....So I'll have to become this commoners companion!?"

Sierra underwent a violent shock, collapsing onto the floor. Jin turned his astonished gaze towards the jangling jewelry of the father.

"It's not really a problem. But the fact that your father's jewelry hasn't disappeared, must mean that, the conjured items won't just disappear, right?"

"But, after spending the money, it's gone! Without hiring any employees, how is my hair going to get combed every morning!?"

"Use a brush, and comb it yourself."

"Your reply, why is it always so abzurd!"

"I don't have the self confidence to win against your absurdity....."

Jin was tired of Sierra's previous panic, yet wasn't very stressed.

"Anyway, just take that ring to a pawnshop and trade it for some money, after that just start being thrifty."

"PAWNSHOP! THRIFTY!"

Raising her head, Sierra had screamed in a high pitched voice.

"I swear upon my pride as an idol, to never accept such a commoner's proposal!"

"Exactly, just like I did, all you have to do is conjure money and you can level up!"

"As I thought, money drives people crazy."

Jin muttered, taking a breath. Sierra turned her gaze towards him.

"B,-But.....he'll end up with nothing."

"Don't listen to him."

"The Genie of the Lamp doesn't get to choose the master. Well, don't feel too disappointed."

Puffing his cheeks out, Sierra's father tried to comfort her, clapping his hand on her shoulder.

"Also, before someone can really become the Genie of the Lamp and get released, it's necessary to serve the Master. Doing that takes patience."

"Before someone reaches that point, about how long does it take?"

Sierra asked, clinging onto her father. He responded by simply shrugging his shoulders.

"Who knows?"

"How can you be so relaxed?"

"For my father and I, it took hundreds of years before the Genie of the Lamp was called out to do something."

"Ehhh?"

"Most likely, the lamp was buried or something. This time, your Master called you out which means the Magic Book was reset hundreds of years."

Listening to that, Jin stopped, dropping his chin to his hand.

".....But, isn't it weird that the Genie of the Magic Lamp is in Japan?"

"Hmpf. The studying of commoners is insufficient."

"Apart from your daughter, for an adult to have that kind of tone, it really annoys me."

"Did you learn how in the eighth century the silk road was used to transport articles of clothing and such? In the past, Japan and Persia traded as well. Back and forth from Persia along the silk road, the Magic Lamp finally made it here to Japan."

"I don't believe it! Why am I being pulled into poverty!?"

Clenching both fists, Sierra had snapped at her father. He turned around, defiant.

"Don't think you're the only victim here! Because I can't use magic, I'm also in quite a bind!"

"So father, does that mean you're still a servant?"

"I used a sacrifice to separate. To the end, you will be this little falcon's servant, so do your best because the fate of the Zadou House's finances rests on your shoulders, Sierra."

"Yeah but.....what is it I have to....."

Sierra was still hesitating. Jin was trying to appeal to her father.

"Oi, don't disregard what I have to say! Why aren't you listening to people? You can't be here, because this is a dormitory!"

"You're still young. Just blow off the rules the adults have!"

"Saying stuff with an expression like that, if you don't want to get chased, don't say things like that."

"My circumstances aren't great either. You don't have an agreeable personality, boy."

"Why am I a problem child?"

"That's enough, boy!"

Sierra's father brought his face in very close to Jin's chest, with a startling expression.

"When I got married, I promised my wife that I would provide her with money forever. Since there's no more money, there'll be a divorce."

"So you can buy love with money?"

"Well, if you pay a lot."

"That's like, fake then."

"Quit talking! Because the divorce is your fault, I hope your whole life is cursed!"

"How selfish....."

Jin was astonished at the pressuring force exerted by Sierra's father. With a frantic appearance, Sierra tapped on her father's shoulder.

"Father, is it true you'll get a divorce? That's awful!"

"Well then, let this be a secret for just the three of us. My wife can never know about this."

Glaring at Jin, Sierra jabbed her finger at him.

"Commoner! From today on you will be my Master! I'm going to level up, and return back to being a regular idol!"

"D-Don't go deciding things on your own! I keep saying girls aren't allowed in here, even so, who would want someone as selfish as you.....!"

"Now, tell me your wish! Spit it out!"

Ignoring Jin's objection, Sierra grabbed both of his shoulders, and pushed him over the top of the mountain of books. Long hair went over Jin's face, tickling him. It was extremely painful with his back pushed into the books.

"Th-That's not the attitude you should have towards your Master!"

"Shut up, you only have the status of a commoner!"

"Wait a minute, Sierra. You level up according to the satisfaction gauge of your Master, so don't be so rough."

"'Satisfaction Gauge'...what's that?"

"It's just like it sounds."

Grabbing Jin's arm, Sierra's father helped him up.

"Boy, boy. All you have to do is say 'ChiChinPuiPui♪'.
"

"Sorry but, I'm not that kind of happy careless person with no hobbies."

"You sure have a lot of pride, huh...."

"I don't have much pride, but it's normal to not say that right?"

"It's fine just say it."

"I'd rather die than say it!"

"What a troublesome guy! You want to eat the ingredients of a canape!"

"Let's just have a fashionable cooking party with an idol."

"You'll say it; so say it!"

Sierra's father had drawn himself up. A little more and he would have added two centimeters to his height. Jin broke under his stature.

"......Can't get out of it so...ChiChinPui......pui....."

As expected of throwing away his dignity, Jin's last word was very small. Sierra's father then took his hand, and placed it on top of Sierra's head, making rubbing motions.

"......Eh."

At that moment, Sierra was wondering what was happening. In the next moment, a high pitched scream arose, as Jin's hand moved around.

"Kyaaaaaaa! What is your filthy commoner's hand doing on my head! Someone's going to have use shampoo to disinfect it!"

"It's true I should wash my hands, but you don't have to go that far....."

Jin muttered in a hard voice. The headdress Sierra was wearing was giving off a weak shine. Sierra's father gave a heavy sigh.

"Look. You're making the Master extremely displeased , as the satisfaction gauge hasn't gone up even a little."

"Why, why is it shining?"

"As the satisfaction gauge goes up, the intensity level of the light will go up."

"Father, could you explain it normally?"

"Look, if you want a Master's mood to change, start by going into the kitchen and calling out "Master!"."

"Huhm....."

Sierra turned her puzzled eyes towards Jin.

"T.....to this commoner, I have to....."

"Look here, if you keep up with that depressing face, your Master's satisfaction level is going to go down even further. Practice saying, 'Did you call me, Master?'."

Like a musical conductor, Sierra's father raised his finger with a wave. Jin then unexpectedly yelled.

"Don't call out something like that! Just go home!"

"Ca.....call out, you say....."

Sierra's face was flushed deep red, as she had one hand closed into a fist on her chest, while shaking. Sierra's father laughed, nodding in satisfaction.

"Good, one more time. Next say, 'Master'!"

"M.....ma.....mast....."

Sierra sounded like a broken CD replaying, but she finally lost her patience, screaming out,

"Ahh geeez! Why do I have to say something like this!"

Steadily, something sounded against the wall. In shock , Jin turned his face. It had come from the wall of the next room over.

"Hey, Araki, it's Yutada. You're too loud!"

"Ah.....s-sorry."

Jin apologized quickly, and putting his finger to his lips, made a "Shhhh" sound.

"You can't make noise! It'll be a problem if a girl was found in here, so just get out already!"

"Can't do that. Until something is done for the Master, it's impossible to leave."

Listening to what her father said, Sierra remembered how when she had tried to leave the room before, she had somehow been unable to leave the room.

"I can't.....go home.....?"

"No way.....! Yuuya will be coming back any time now , what do we do!"

"That's what I should be asking! With these embarrassing clothes that make me look like a common servant to you, if I was ever found in this dirty room I would be so embarrassed that there's no way I could go to school!"

"I'm troubled as well! If the Genie of the Lamp's secret was ever found out, my wife.....my wife.....!"

Sierra was in a rage, while her father was worrying heavily. Jin hid the picture of his shock.

"The two of you really don't get what I'm saying."

"A-Anyway, the job dictates that something has to be done before we can go back!"

While Sierra was talking, she had begun taking the books that were lying in piles on the floor, and tossing them into the trash bin. With Sierra doing this all of a sudden, Jin became surprised.

"Heey! What do you think you're doing!"

"It's filthy trash, so I'm throwing it away."

"If you'd recognize this stuff, you'd see that none of it is trash, these are all things sent from my father and his excavation team."

"Excavation?"

"My father and his group are in the Middle East for Solomon's.....no, that has nothing to do with this!"

"So it doesn't look like garbage. Commoners, they really don't throw anything out do they."

"It's not my fault! Anyway, don't touch!"

"It's because, without any work, the Genie of the Lamp won't be able to level up! It's because you don't have a wish, so it can't be helped!"

"Then, do something to heal my shoulder."

"Have you gone to a Hospital?"

"You're not really helpful."

"Shut up! Commoners really should be quiet!"

On the other hand, Sierra had picked up a cardboard box. At that moment, holding the box with the her hands, some kind of furry thing sprung up; as an animal with red and black spots scurried to run away:

"KYAAAAAAAA!"

With a scream, Sierra scrambled to the top of a pile of books. With her voice filling the region with half the level of ultrasonic waves, Jin spontaneously plugged his ears. Sierra screamed while looking at Jin from the top of the books.

"Spider! A spider came out!"

"What are you saying, this is something you can do."

"Disgusting, things like spiders are disgusting! Just, hurry up and exterminate it!"

"Why are you giving your Master an order!"

Jin yelled at Sierra. Again, someone beat against the wall.

"Araki! Quit being so loud! Just now, that almost sounded like a girl's voice!"

"A-Ah, it's because a spider appeared."

Jin replied automatically, with a loud voice. The response that came next sounded disdainful.

"Screaming like that because of a spider, what a weak person!"

"What's wrong with calling out like a weak person?"

With a jolt Jin turned his face towards Sierra's father. Sierra's father was in shock, hiding behind a pile of books , as his entire neck shivered.

"I-It's not like Sierra won't level up if I don't help!"

"......Geez. The both of you, just what did you come here for."

Jin slumped his shoulders in exhaustion, as he picked up the spider. Goosebumps sprang up all over Sierra, as she put her hands to her face, yelling.

"Kyaaa! I can't believe you actually picked it up!"

"Spiders are good creatures that eat harmful bugs, but people still kill them."

Jin opened the window, tossing the spider outside. The spider started a thread from the second floor window, and descended like a drop of water into the yard below. Closing the window, Jin turned his voice to Sierra.

"Look, it's not chasing you anymore."

"Wa-Wait, what are you going to do with that hand!?"

"What about my hands?"

"The spider was moving around on your hand! Use soap and clean your hands!"

Sierra bellowed from the top of the mountain of books. Thinking "my gosh," Jin followed the nagging order, went over to the washbasin in the room, and cleaned his hands.

"Look, they're clean. Now hurry and get down from there."

Shaking the water from his hands, Jin spoke in a careful voice. However Sierra was still shaking.

"No way, it's not like the spider can't walk back into this place! Kill it with a rag or something!"

"That's it, actually kill it the second time, boy!"

"Quit with the stupid orders! I don't know who the servant is anymoooore, just go back already!"

With a headache, Jin continued to look at Sierra who was still staying on top of the books. She was crying.

"Bu.....but that's just it, until I do a job I can't go back!"

"And, like Sierra, I can't go back until she goes back."

"I didn't ask that!.....By the way, eh? Why can't you go back either?"

"When Sierra came through the lamp, the dimension space remained open for a while, allowing things to cross over. I came through that gate, but the gate has already closed."

"Even if the gate's closed, just walk home."

"I don't have shoes."

Sierra's father spoke, while showing off his feet. He was only wearing slippers. Having come from inside his own house to Jin's room, he hadn't even changed his footwear. Jin's next words were biting.

"Go back in your slippers!"

"Wait, if Papa goes back, what do I do!"

Sierra had put her anger aside, and with anxiety showed a face that looked close to crying. Her lips were trembling.

"You want to clean the floor?"

"I'd die first!"

"Then what should we do."

Jin turned his gaze towards a clock on the wall. The hands pointed to five-thirty.

When Yuuya went to the lounge, he had said he would return in and hour.....it's already been almost an hour.

"Can't be helped....you, what are you able to do?"

"I can sing. Would you like me to give you my opera performance?"

"It would be bad if you were to use a loud voice and be found out, don't you get this yet?"

"Then, shall I give this room a flower arrangement?"

"Thanks. That's really problematic."

"What a selfish commoner!"

"Neither are good! Anyway, just get off the books for now!"

Jin had lifted his gaze to Sierra standing atop the mountain of books, when, at that moment, all movement stopped. From below, he had seen under the skirt, to the ruffling frills and lace that were part of the petticoat. Jin stiffened in that moment of realization, as Sierra descended from atop the mountain.

"W-What are you looking at, you lowly commoner!"

"It just happened! Besides, didn't I tell you to get off already."

Sierra and Jin glared at each other. When all of a sudden a knocking came from the door. Jin was shocked.

"Ooi, Jin, is everything in order?"

"Crap.....Yuuya's back already."

Jin pushed a hand against his brow, breathing heavily. Sierra just looked at Jin in anxiety.

"Yuuya.....Utada Yuuya from our class? He's coming into this room?"

"He's my roommate that's why. This isn't good....."

"Th-This isn't good is all you can say! What are we gonna do?"

Sierra had become quite pale. A key wasn't needed to open the door. Thinking hard, Jin frantically rushed to gather cardboard boxes which he set in front of the door.

"Wait a bit, Yuuya! There's a lot of stuff in front of the door right now!"

"Ehh?"

His voice showed dissatisfaction, Yuuya turned the door knob. But because of the barricade blocking the door, the door didn't open. For the moment Jin let out a sigh from his chest.

"What is it, is the room still not put in order? Do you want me to talk to the dorm head after all?"

"Wait, wait, wait! Just a bit more and I'm done, seriously!"

"Really~?"

Sierra's father was looking around the room. In the middle of blocking the entrance, and not having tidied up before, the room was in a terrific state. Moving around, Jin glared at him.

"And who's fault is it!"

"It's fine if there's only a little more to go, so just let me in. Because the radio program is about to start."

In a hurry, Yuuya banged on the door. Jin turned his eyes towards the top of Yuuya's desk. Textbooks were all lined up along a bookstand, across from which there was a CD Player.

"You listening, Jin? Open up right now, open up!"

Yuuya was making a ruckus beating on the door, and from the surrounding rooms other boarding students began emerging.

"Utada, what are you doing?"

"Jin's shut himself up in the room."

"Oi, Araki! How long have you been doing this!?"

The corridor was filled with people talking. Sierra was waving both hands in all directions.

"Wh-What are we going to do! In front of all those people, and I'm dressed like this.....!"

"No matter what, it's too messy in here, so I'm going to get evicted from the dorm for sure. I don't even care anymore....."

Losing the will to do anything, Jin sat down where he was. With a desperate expression Sierra grabbed him by the collar and got all up in his face. Being so close to Sierra, he could smell a pleasant soapy scent.

"Even if you've given up, there's no way I'm going to let this happen! Hurry up and just tell me to do something! You're the Master aren't you!"

"Whatever I say, you'll just refuse."

"Then hurry up and think of something that I won't say no to!"

"Is this how a servant is supposed to act?!"

"Jin, just let me in already!"

Yuuya heaved his body against the door, causing a deep sound to ring out.

"Alright, we'll lend you a hand!"

"One~Two~Three!"

Saying that, the boarding students all together rammed against the door. Made of wood, the entire old dormitory shuddered as the glass rang with the sound. Surprised, Sierra's face began to shed tears.

"It.....it's no use anymore. It's no use."

Losing all the overbearing might she had up until now , Sierra sat down in despair. She had such high pride, but until now she had never gone through such a humiliating experience. She looked like a small trembling bird, and Jin couldn't help but start to pity her.

"......It can't be helped. It's all right, I'll think of something."

"Really you will?"

As Jin looked into Sierra's eyes, he noticed her brimming tears. He relied on those eyes. Heavy pressure began building in Jin's chest. He started to regret having said that, as Sierra clasped both of her hands to her chest in hopeful dependence, appearing as if she were praying. But there's no way he could betray her now.

As the frame of the door continued to be pounded against, and the loud sounds created continued on, Jin began getting frantic, but continued to think. Suddenly, a light flashed on inside his head. "Because the radio program is about to start." With a flashback Jin remembered Yuuya's words.

"That's it! This isn't something difficult, so you should be able to do it."

Jin gestured towards the CD Player on top of Yuuya's desk.

"Zadou. Could you turn the radio cassette on."

"Radio?"

Sierra worriedly had her hand by her mouth, and relying on this she was looking around.

"What's a radio cassette?

"The thing over there!"

Pushing his forehead in exasperation, Jin dragged Sierra over.

"The mechanism on top of the desk! Press the blue switch!"

"Blue switch? W, wonder if it's this."

"Sierra, since you're a Genie of the Lamp, say "Leave it to me, Master" over there!"

Sierra's father spoke to her from behind. Jin quickly ran over and plugged up his mouth.

"You're going to confuse her even more, so don't say useless things!"

"Uhmm.....blue Master....."

"Look, you confused her!"

Jin put him in a stranglehold for having spoken to her.

"The blue switch! It's the one furthest to the right!"

"Ah, t-this one?"

With a slender finger Sierra pushed the button. With a red LED light showing that power was connected, a DJ's voice came flying out with strength.

"Hey ma~n! It's Chekira! To all you listeners, you ready Yo! Until Nine o'clock today, it's Chekira~Uto!"

"Ah! It's on!"

Sierra reflexively clapped her hands together. Even Jin felt a sense of relief. Just then, without taking even a moment to relax, Sierra's father pushed her in front of Jin .

"Now, Sierra! Don't hesitate! Before your Master's satisfaction fades, measure the satisfaction gauge!"

"Ah, y-yeah. Just, hurry up and rub my head!"

Recovering her boldness, Sierra was now moving in on Jin. He was bewildered by her forcefulness.

"Hey, is that any way to act towards someone you want a favor from?"

"Whatever, just hurry up! That guy is going to come in here any time now!"

Sierra had previously shown such pride, so what she was doing now showed just how desperate she was. Jin reluctantly moved his hand to her head. Earlier having said "Dirty hands of a commoner" with dislike, and not wanting to be touched, Jin was now gently stroking her head.

"Boy, right there say "ChiChinPuiPui♪"!"

"I-I got it! ChiChinPuiPui!"

Becoming desperate, Jin recited the incantation nearly screaming. Then, Sierra's headdress atop her head, began

shining brightly. Her eyes showing surprise, Sierra touched the headdress.

"......Wait. This is it?"

"The indispensable satisfaction gauge hasn't even leveled up above ten percent."

With a sigh, Sierra's father took a deep breath. Angry, Sierra grabbed hold of Jin, screaming at him.

"Wait! What's with this? Be more grateful!"

"All you did was push in a switch on a radio cassette, and you get this violent, you look like you drank a boiled dirty fingernail."

"I didn't have to push the switch you know! Someone like me should be telling a commoner like you to do it for me!"

"A~h Gee~z, just shut it! And go home!"

"Telling me to shut it, what an impertinent commoner! Fine then, I'm going back! I don't want to stay in this spider infested place any longer!"

The moment Sierra shouted, the lamp began to shine. Sierra's figure was surrounded by smoke, and in the next moment, all was sucked into the lamp. The lamp lit up the surroundings, revealing a vague, circular type illusion giving off light. With a look of glee, Sierra's father jumped into the circle.

"Finally, I can go back with this! Boy, next time show Sierra more appreciation!"

"I'll bet you 1,000,000 peso's I won't."

Jin muttered, as Sierra's father disappeared.

"Let me in, Jin! The radio program has already started you know!"

From outside the door, Yuuya raised his voice. The door was opening easily, little by little all the boarding students were pushing against it, as the barricade of cardboard boxes started crumbling down. They would break in shortly, so in that case.....Sierra had been swept into the rainbow colored space. Yuuya had told the dorm head that the boarding students were trying to break down a barricade to see what was going on in a room,

and that person would definitely come through the entrance way. Whatever happened, he wouldn't be able to stay in the dorm any longer.

"Well then....from tomorrow on, wonder where I should sleep."

Having given up and sitting down in a sulking mood, he dropped a book to the ground. Suddenly, that book was pulled into the rainbow colored circle, vanishing with a swish. Jin opened his eyes wide. "When Sierra came through the lamp, the dimension space remained open for a while, allowing things to cross over."...Jin remembered what Sierra's father had said.

"That's it!"

Jin leaped up, grabbing every box and tossing it into the rainbow dimension space. The cardboard boxes all vanished with a pretty swooshing sound.

"All right, now everything has been removed from here."

Feeling a hundred times more energetic, Jin was surprised with the horsepower he exerted, as both the books and cardboard boxes had by now all gone into the

rainbow space. Until now, he had been quite depressed, but as each box vanished with a swoosh, Jin would gloat, until finally the entire room was clean. From the corridor, all the boarding students' voices could be heard. It was definitely heating up out there.

"Next time hit it with everything you've got everybody !"

"Yeah! One, Two~, Three!"

All the boarding students rammed into the door with all their might. However, he had already removed the barricade.

"KYAAAA!"

With a crash, the ten boarding students and their leader crashed in through the door that wouldn't open earlier. Inside the clean and sparkling room, Jin put on a straight face.

"Didn't I tell you. just a little more and I'd be done."

"Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, why did that take so much effort."

Numbering one of many, Yuuya lifted his pale face.

".....Woah. It really got cleaned up."

Yuuya looked around with his eyes squinted as thin as a thread.

"Yo, ma~n! It's time for requests Yo, It's radio name " Aitzu Wakahotsu" Yo! Chekira!"

Within the silent room, only the bustling radio made any sound.

Chapter 2: Solomon's Treasure

In the dorm room the next morning, Jin donned his uniform in a refreshed mood.

With a large smile, he happily scanned the room. Not since moving in had the room been so clean.

"Aaaah, what refreshing weather."

Looking out the window, he gave a big stretch. The morning's breakfast had also been quite wonderfully delicious. Yuuya was also in a good mood, listening to music with his headphones.

"You organized the room pretty quickly. Sorry about yesterday, blood just rushed to my head that's all."

Yuuya apologized to Jin, moving his headphones down to his neck and letting the sound spill out.

"Everybody makes mistakes. Don't worry about it."

"Hey, what's with that high and mighty way of speaking?"

Despite all the trouble Sierra had brought upon Jin, it was still thanks to her that all the boxes were gone. It would have been troublesome for the Genie of the Lamp to have helped out...at least that's what he thought.

(I really should have shown more thanks for yesterday . Because I can't call her again.)

The lamp had been put in a box, and then sealed into the deep recesses of a desk. This was for safety. That way Sierra wouldn't be called out from the lamp being accidentally rubbed. It solved everything.

When it came time to go to school, the two left the room. The smell of sweat and mold were a unique part of the inside of the men's dormitory, but for some reason there was a new unique fresh scent in the air. Yuuya wriggled his nose, sniffing.

"This smell...where have I smelt it before."

"I wonder if it's incense."

Jin replied while his nose sniffed the air as well. Yuuya shook his head.

"An incense stick doesn't have this kind of scent."

"That's not what I meant, here. It's kind of like the smell of an old lady using a folding fan."

"Ah, I see. It's like the smell of an old lady."

Yuuya laughed aloud, while over his back something taller than him cast its long shadow.

"This incense is a type of citrus fruit. Calling an upperclassman an old lady, the first years this year sure have a lot of courage."

In shock, the two could only shake. A tall slender figure wearing a traditional Kendo Gi and Hakama was holding a bamboo sword. With long hanging hair, the young man stared down with cold, strict eyes. Behind him, and wearing their school uniforms, were four members of the Skinhead group. They were the dorm head's right hand guardsmen, subordinates under his direct control, and all were third year students at the dorm.

The scent had risen from the Kendo Gi which Ukyou was wearing. Incense used to be burned in the Heian Period to provide kimono's with a pleasant smell, and it seemed Ukyou had these traditional hobbies.

“No way dormitory head, that is.....no.”

Yuuya's face was becoming a shade of pale green. Ukyou took Yuuya's music-blaring headphones from around his neck, slamming them into a nearby wall.

“You're a Japanese man, yet here you are indulging in the Western Music Culture, how weak!”

Ukyou was the head of the Kendo club. He was pale from practicing indoors all the time, and as time continued that feature began to grow more and more pronounced. Yuuya shook from his uncontrollable fear of him.

“S-Sorry, please forgive me.”

“You trash, well, it's true you're in the Light Music Club. For the sake of winning the girls you buzz around like a mole cricket! If you keep up the flirting, I'm going to beat you up!”

Ukyou thrust against Yuuya's shoulder with the bamboo sword. Terrified, Yuuya stood unsteadily as his legs wobbled. Watching this, Jin blocked the way.

“Wait a minute! The first one to say you smelled like an old lady, was me!”

Ukyou lifted his thin eyebrow in response. The surrounding protection squad moved to stand in front of Jin.

“First year kid! Watch what comes out of your mouth when speaking to the dorm head!”

“Yeah, well I haven't broken any of Tachibana Dorm's rules yet! You just want to get to the punishing!”

“J-Jin, hurry up and apologize!”

Yuuya was being encircled by the protection squad. However Jin had leapt out powerfully like a bunny, evading capture.

“I don't think there's anything to apologize for though. I just said what I was thinking that's all.”

“What the, you first year brat!”

"Anyway, wait a minute."

With that, Ukyou raised his hand, restraining his protection squad. He had an icy composure as he reigned them in.

"If I remember correctly, you're Araki Jin. To not be afraid of these guys, you're pretty gutsy. But with the authority I hold, it's not good for you to mouth off."

Ukyou gripped Jin's chest, pulling him close. The smell of tachibana incense filled the air.

"We protect the rules and order of the dorm, so show some more respect to your upperclassmen. This is an order from your senior, and you aren't allowed to speak out against it. Araki Jin, normally you would be sent off to be punished but.....since you're a new student, we'll just take away your meals."

"T-Take away my meals?"

Jin's raised voice held a bit of hysteria.

"That's right. There will be no lunch or dinner for you today."

Jin was astonished at Ukyou's cold words. Suddenly a member of the protection squad spoke up.

“Dorm head, it's about time to attend school. The morning patrol in the neighborhood.....”

“Okay. Just let me change my clothes.”

Ukyou and his protection squad withdrew, leaving a chilling wind over their shoulders. Yuuya grabbed ahold of Jin.

“For saying all that, it's kind of good you got off so easy.”

“Where does it say they can take away meals?”

Dinner at the dormitory started at six, and unless everyone was there no one could start eating. Also, that time was closing time for the dorm, so from that point on no one was permitted to go out. Those were the rules for meals, so outside food couldn't be brought in later. Consequently, withholding meals actually meant that until the next day's breakfast, there would be nothing to eat. Yuuya pressed his forehead in shock.

"In this situation what are you going to do for food! Why didn't the guys with the dorm head say anything about him taking food from you?"

"I know, meals are the basis for human life after all."

"With all this talking about human life and all, we don't have anymore time, but.....geez it's because you transferred from another school that you don't understand yet how scary the dorm head is. When he's in a bad mood, do you have any idea how lucky it is to get off with only a few meals taken away?"

"Even though you said that yesterday too, he really wasn't in that bad a mood. Still, what an obstinate guy."

"Shhhh! You may think it's fine to say stuff like that, but that's what lost you your food! Back when I was in my second year of junior high, I stepped on his shadow, and did you know I got punished just for that?"

"Sounds like an anachronism."

"His entire household is extremely old fashioned, they're like nobles. Especially from the weak position of a second year junior high student."

A stand was put out in front of the dorm's entrance hall, with packages of onigiri stacked up. They were bentos for the boarding students. There were five second year junior high school boarding students distributing, bowing their heads each time they handed one out.

Because of their weak position as underclassmen, their job as second years was to prepare the meals. Shopping, breakfast, lunch and bentos, and also dinner, each of the three meals had a system made for it. There was also the dish washing group. It had been arranged so that there would always be around ten first year high school students, with thirty junior high second years, so that there would always be people to take care of the work.

Jin and Yuuya both reached out their hands towards the bundles, when a boy on duty shook his head. The first year student had a serious expression on his face.

“I'm sorry. But the dorm head said that Araki doesn't get any.”

“You don't have to be so uptight. What if there are extras?”

“It's alright. Anybody that wants seconds can have as much as they'd like.”

“So you're listening to an upperclassman's orders then ?””

“The dorm head's orders are absolute.”

The boy cut the conversation coldly. Stout hearted and with the appearance of a kid, he really didn't seem to be a primary school student. It was starting to look like he wouldn't be getting anything to eat.....Jin dropped his shoulders in defeat.

“Let's get going, Jin. It'll be bad if the dorm head finds you here, you might end up losing breakfast tomorrow as well.”

With that Yuuya began pulling him away by his shirt's collar. Jin reluctantly moved out into the entrance hall, waving goodbye to the onigiri he was unable to obtain.

Turning towards the school and walking along the embankment, Jin asked Yuuya for help.

“Hey, Yuuya. Is there any way you'll split your lunch with me?”

“Don't joke around. If I don't eat my blood sugar will decrease.”

“Ah! I forgot the book I borrowed from the library.”

“Come on! Listen when people are talking to you. Can't you go to a convenience store and buy something?”

“It's the end of the month already, so I'm kinda out of money. Let me borrow some.”

“Don't give me any of that. I'm also running out of money. But I can manage to lend you thirty-eight yen.”

“Together with my eighty-five yen.....there's not even enough to buy bread.”

“If it's 'Alf Layla,' they use tabs.”

“'Alf Layla'?”

A thousand nights.....that's what it means in Arabic. It was a phrase found in Arabian Nights, where it was used as 'One Thousand and One Nights.'

“We're at the back of the place. The food is cheap yet delicious. You've never been?”

“No. I haven't been yet.....”

Jin looked to his side, as just then Yuuya had laughed.

“Then, just follow me. Since it's your first time, you can't put the meal on a tab yet. There's a shop girl who's ridiculously cute. But not at Zadou's level. Zadou climbed up to the first rank, so she's in a totally different world.”

Ignoring Yuuya's words while he was in dream mode, Jin remembered yesterday's escapade with Sierra, wondering what was so good about her.....he couldn't comprehend the mystery. Of course, saying something like that to Yuuya who had entered a worship group from his love of her, would cast him out as a traitor, he would become a demon for having spoken his mind.

As they continued walking along the embankment, sounds approached from the back that sounded like the pattering of a small deer's footsteps.

“Onii-cha~n!”

Jin was being waved down. A small girl was running towards him with bobbing hair, as her face was blushing deep red. She seemed to be a lot like a small mouse, especially with her large eyes. Yuuya tilted his head to the side in confusion.

“Jin, you know her? Which kindergarten is she from?”

“.....Ai-Aika?”

Jin was surprised for a moment, when the girl..... Kasumi Aika, suddenly fell on her face. With both hands thrown out in front of her, it looked as though she had dove for home base. Jin rushed over to her side.

“Aika! A,-Are you alright?”

“Just now.....she tripped when there was nothing to trip on...”

Yuuya muttered with stiff eyes. Aika picked herself up , and turned to face Jin.

“Onii-chan, we finally meet!”

Jin's body was hugged tightly. The other person's body was slender, and seemed as though it might break easily. That body like a matchstick was wearing the Harusha Middle School Academy's uniform. Surprised, Jin asked Aika about it.

“You, why are you wearing that uniform?”

“Huh. That girl, she's from yesterday's.....”

Yuuya pointed at Aika. That time yesterday when they had seen Sierra's car along the embankment, this was the girl that had been sitting next to her. He turned an amazed look towards Jin.

“How do you know Aika?”

“Wasn't she in Zadou Sierra's car yesterday? I thought she was in kindergarten, but could it be she's in middle school?”

After Yuuya's question, Aika was embarrassedly hiding behind Jin's back.

“W-Wait, why are you hiding?”

“Don't get too close. She's not very immunized against guys.”

“Immunized, what, do you think I'm some kind of infectious bacteria?”

Disregarding an upset Yuuya, Jin turned to ask Aika a question.

“You were in her car?”

“Yeah. On my way home I hurt my leg, and she helped me by taking me back to the dormitory.”

“.....You probably, just fell onto the level ground like you did just now.”

“Being able to ride in Sierra's car, was like a dream. Because of my nervousness, I was being careful about what we were talking about.”

“Hmmm..... It's nice that such a selfish girl can show some kindness.”

Slightly surprised, Jin brushed his forehead with his index finger.

“Dormitory?”

“Yeah. Sakura Dormitory.”

“Wait a minute. Why did you transfer from the all girls elementary school? Actually, why did your parents say 'okay' to you living in a dorm when here you are tripping over nothing?”

“That's because, Onii-chan moved here so suddenly.”

Aika puffed out her cheeks.

“I asked auntie if I could transfer to this school, and she said if there's a vacancy in the new students entrance exam it would be okay.”

“That's right.....in spite of your slowness, you must have done pretty well.”

“Geez! Onii-chan! Don't call me slow!”

Angrily Aika closed both hands into fists. But slamming into Jin's stomach was instead, Yuuya's elbow.

“She's pretty cute. Your little sister that is.”

“She's not my sister. She's a friend from my old neighborhood.”

“Uhm, Onii-chan. Can we go to school together?”

Looking out to make sure Yuuya wasn't getting any closer, Aika was shimmying around Jin.

“Sorry, Yuuya. I'll meet you in the classroom.”

“Why are you suddenly so cold-hearted? My my, I never noticed.”

After finishing his sarcasm and slowly increasing his pace, he paused suddenly.

“Wait a minute. Did you say Sierra was a selfish girl?”

“Well I didn't have a more appropriate adjective. Evil maybe, or brutal.”

“Don't say something you don't understand. Since it's me, it's okay, but if anyone else heard you talk about her like that, I don't think it would be good. You'll probably be attacked in the back of the head.”

Yuuya walked off first, as Aika latched herself onto Jin's shoulder.

“It's just as he was saying, Onii-chan. Sierra-sama is beautiful and kind, so all us middle school girls want to be like her.”

“.....I simply can't imagine that we're talking about the same person.”

Thinking about how Sierra had appeared from the lamp yesterday, Jin crossed his arms.

(It couldn't be that there's a different person with the exact same first and last name, right.....?)

“She brought me back yesterday. In reality Sierra-sama , even though she is a beautiful person with a lot of money, she's really kind, and I'm becoming more and more of a fan of hers.”

“Well.....according to Yuuya, it's rare for a guy to not be entranced by her.”

Jin didn't really understand. Aika tried to reign in her laughter.

“Is that true. I think everyone's the same, that they all really like her a lot. But, I was the only one she had a heartfelt conversation with.”

“What's that?”

“Well, it looks like there's someone who dislikes Sierra . The other day, someone put a green caterpillar on a twig, into her shoe locker.”

“Seriously?”

Jin thought Sierra was certainly selfish.....but after listening to those cruel words, his stomach began to get a little upset.

“What kind of idiot would do something like that.”

“I don't know but.....after asking the boy next to her about it, he just said it was a really bad thing for

someone to have done. That's why I encouraged Sierra-sama, and she thanked me, so then we talked about all kinds of things. If everyone in class knew this, then they'd be burning with jealousy. Tehehe.”

“I guess it must be pretty troublesome, for her to stand out so much.”

“Ah, that's right. Onii-chan, Are you free for lunch break today?”

Aika asked, with her head tilted to the side. Performing that motion her hair shifted over her face. With that, Jin remembered he didn't have his bento, at the same time his stomach rumbled loudly.

“A-Ah. I didn't have any plans.....I don't have a bento to eat.....”

Hearing that, Aika happily clapped her hands together , followed by grabbing onto Jin's arm.

“Yay! Today, third, fourth period is home economics. We're making cupcakes, so I'll bring some extras to outside the staff room. Onii-chan, would you eat them?”

Aika brought her flushed face up to look at Jin. It was a sight for the gods.....but because of how it looked to have Aika plastered to his arm, he was growing more nervous as he furrowed his eyebrows.

“Ah, nah.....it's better if you don't cook. Back when you were in elementary school, you'd cut your fingers and get all kinds of wounds, remember? Even now, it seems like you've been getting an occasional scrape.”

“I'm fine now. After entering the school, the reason I haven't been able to search for you until now is because I've been on kitchen duty at the dorm the whole time..... even though I've gotten hurt, I've been getting better and better.”

“Hmm. I thought it would be impossible for you to live as a boarding student, but it seems you're doing okay.”

“Geez, I'm in middle school after all. I'm not a kid anymore.”

In a provoking gesture, Aika placed a fist on her hip, while sticking out her tongue and making a “blaah” sound.

“Yeah, I guess you've really grown up from that time when you were just like a baby. I guess you don't use diapers anymore then huh.”

“D-DIAPERS WHAT THE HECK'S WITH THAT!?”

“You don't wear pampers now do you?”

“Geez! I hate you! You're not getting any cake!”

Aika quickly turned her face away. If this continued he would end up losing his meal.

“Sorry. I apologized, so please don't take my cake away.”

“A cake?”

“That's right. A cake.”

“.....Geez!”

Shocked, Aika began laughing. It was a bright, rolling laugh. Because they had both lived in the same neighborhood, Jin had known her since the time she had worn diapers. Having been raised in a warm, loving family, Aika had been quite obedient. Her name had

come from her white body, which reminded the parents of a white bridal rose, symbolizing happiness and love. Her name literally meant “love” and “flower”. And the laugh, showed the light from her soul.

“If you want forgiveness, will you say ChiChinPuiPui?”

“ChiChinPuiPui?”

Remembering something, Jin's eyebrows were knit tightly. Clinging to Jin, Aika showed him her knee.

“This is yesterday's injury. Onii-chan, didn't you say whenever I have an injury, you'll say ChiChinPuiPui?”

Like a baby deer she was looking up at Jin with her eyes and long eyelashes. Saying “Ahh,” Jin brought himself towards Aika's knee, making his finger act like a dragonfly as it came closer.

“♪ChiChinPuiPui, pain pain, hurry up and fly to the mountain top.♪”

Having often done the spell for her when she was younger, even though it was the same chant, he didn't feel the same sort of embarrassment with Aika. Jin thought nothing of it as he finished the incantation.

“Ehe. Onii-chan look, it's being effective.”

“It's just your mood that's all. It's just a superstition after all.”

“Hey. Are you still searching for that treasure thing?”

“Nn.....more or less.”

Jin turned his face. Aika was grinning.

“It's confusing for me, but.....Onii-chan, you'll definitely find it. When you do, show it to me, k?

At the same time, the problem of Sierra was revolving in Jin's head. A smiling face like this came to mind. A beautiful girl with money and an excellence record, and one day could suddenly use magic.....what kind of wish could be granted, and why, did she sometimes appear sad.

Even though it was fun to go together with Aika, Jin was feeling heavy. Wondering what to do, he still had no idea.

After parting with Aika and entering Class 1-B, his eyes focused abruptly on Sierra. Up till now, Jin had never even noticed her before. Always buried deep in an archeology book, he had never paid attention to who was in his class.

Finally realizing this, he noticed that out of everyone in class, she really did stand out. Anyway, who knows how many people were circled around her. With a bright smile, she was speaking elegantly. As though they were attendants, they surrounded the Ojou-sama. If Sierra was compared to others, in terms of kindness, certainly he was starting to see what Yuuya and Aika were talking about.

(This is strange.....what I saw yesterday, did I mistake her selfishness?)

Looking at Sierra's surroundings, he noticed all the boys were staring at her with burning eyes.

Upon Jin entering the classroom, Sierra turned her eyes towards him. Jin was taken aback. Prepared for something like what happened yesterday, he put himself on guard, but instead Sierra returned to talking with the other girls, taking no notice of him.

(Hah?)

Receiving a tap on his shoulder, Jin blinked his eyes in surprise. Yuuya was taking his seat, with his thread thin eyes turned towards Jin.

“Despite what you said before, you seem fascinated by Zadou.”

“No, it's not like I'm fascinated.”

“Everyone's fascinated by her.”

“Even if they are, it doesn't seem like anybody is talking to her though.”

“Well, everyone knows they can't catch her, so all they can do is watch her in awe. Someone that would talk to her with their own voice, doesn't exist right?”

Thinking about the Sierra from yesterday, he didn't think that was so. But, looking at the Sierra of now, he could understand Yuuya's desire to get closer.

(Are all the guys in class like that?)

Inundated with such complex questions, Jin hugged his chest. Not wanting to speak up and instead keeping silent, he had one thing that he wanted to ask. After Sierra had left his room, he was wondering what had happened to all those cardboard boxes.

(I don't even know her phone number.....but calling out now wouldn't be right.)

Sierra as well, seemed to want to keep yesterday a secret, so she probably hadn't told anybody anything. Looking for a suitable time to voice his thoughts, Jin patiently waited for the right moment.

She had definitely seen him, having turned her gaze to stare right at him, but paying no heed, she continued to ignore him.

However, with the coming of lunch break.....the middle school girls entered Class 1-B with cupcakes, and the situation began to change.

“Onii-chan, I got them!”

Aika handed Jin a paper bag stuffed with cupcakes. With his stomach already rumbling, Jin took the cupcakes, feeling relieved.

“Thanks. You really saved me.”

From behind Aika, around another ten middle school girls entered, carrying cake boxes. They were all heading for Sierra. As all the other girls gathered to Sierra's desk, she had to hold her small lunch box in her palm.

“Sierra-sama, I made cupcakes in home economics, please eat them!”

“Please take mine as well!”

The middle school girls were surrounding Sierra nervously with high tension. Saying, “Eh, Thank you,” and, “well then, let's all eat together,” a kind smile had risen on her face, which showed her ability to cope while remaining courteous, while at the same time Jin and Aika were intermittently turning their gaze in her direction.

The cupcakes Aika had given, had risen when baked to resemble the color of a fox, while they gave off a sweet vanilla scent. Holding them, they were steamy and warm . Jin admired how well done the cupcakes were.

“These, you really made them?”

“Heh heh, great aren't they?”

Standing next to Jin's desk, Aika had both her hands wrapped around to her back, hugging herself with pride.

“Yeah, they really look great. It's like you bought them from a store.”

“Don't just look at them, praise their taste too.”

Placing a hand on top of Jin's desk, Aika brought her face in close to Jin's.

“You, don't want to eat?”

“We're not supposed to eat in the middle of home economics. Come on and show some discretion when you eat!”

Trembling nervously, Aika urged Jin on. Picking one out to test, Jin ate it, and suddenly the sweet scent of milk and eggs expanded inside his mouth, as it's light texture melted in his mouth.

“Woah. These are actually pretty good.”

“Really? Yes!”

Aika struck a victory pose. Extremely hungry, Jin crammed two to three into his mouth, his cheeks giving away his furious chomping.

“Yah.....preddy good.”

“You tried them again?”

“Yeah. I was thinking you were going to feed me mud pies again.”

“Th.....that was back in kindergarten!”

In her anger Aika turned scarlet. Aika always tended to show her emotions on her face instantly, as she always had since they had known each other as kids, so they could chat leisurely without worries. In comparison with the stressful situation he was in with Sierra yesterday, Jin really felt much more relaxed and at ease now.

Watching Aika attentively, Jin dropped cupcake after cupcake into his stomach, when Yuuya and some other boys' voices cut through.

“Hey. It's obvious none of us would have received anything, but why is it you're the only one who gets cupcakes!”

“Because we were in the same neighborhood as kids.”

As Jin was stuffing his face with cake, that blunt reply was all he could manage. And as all the high school boys started to gather around, Aika ducked behind Jin. Even though she was energetic when around Jin, around other

guys she was really quite shy. Sierra as well, had a different attitude in the classroom than she had had in Jin's room. *I just don't understand girls.* Jin was becoming more confused.

"Jin-kun. It's not good for you to horde. Aren't we your friends?"

While clinging to Jin, Yuuya spoke with a voice like a cat. With the cake box, Jin separated from Yuuya.

"Aika's upset, so quit getting so close."

"If you give us cake, we'll go away."

"Who'd believe that. You didn't freaking give me any Onigiri this morning."

"Forget about stuff in the past."

"It's a super sweet cupcake isn't it?"

"Jin-kun, please. Give us some cupcakes."

All the other guys were coming up one after the other, clinging to Jin, all for the sake of the cupcakes. Jin raised his voice into a yell.

“It hurts, it HURTS! I'll smash 'em! I'm smashing the cakes!”

Aika was completely flustered. Suddenly, Sierra was right beside Jin and the others.

“Could I please have a moment.”

“Za.....Zadou!”

All of the boys stopped moving at once. Always surrounded by girls, Sierra had moved after hearing the voices from the boys. Nothing like this had ever happened before. Sierra, the unattainable flower, someone who was only admired from afar by the boys, had actually come over so suddenly, it was as rare as a baby eating yakiniku. Not knowing what to do, they all just stiffened in panic.

“I have received so many cakes, and I am unable to eat them all by myself.....so I asked the middle school girls, and they have said that it would be okay if I split them, so if you'd like you may eat some.”

Smiling in a friendly manner, the boys couldn't help but be excited.

“I-Itadakimasu, Itadakimasu!”

In a moment, all the boys were separated from Jin, and like hyena's, they madly snatched the cupcakes stacked at Sierra's seat. After the guys had left, Aika emerged from behind Jin's back.

“Sierra-sama, thank you very much for yesterday.”

Straightening herself out with both hands, Aika seemed to gain strength. Sierra was smiling, but Jin could only remember her other face. There was no one else who had noticed but, for some reason there seemed to be something wrong with her smile.

“Is your injury healed yet?”

“Yes! Ah, sorry. If you'd like, I've also made some cupcakes for Sierra-sama.”

“No, it's fine. I've received a lot from other friends already, so it's okay.”

“But, that Onii-chan was in the same class as you, like I heard yesterday.....”

Trying to apologize, Aika's shoulders had dropped. Jin remembered something.

(That means Aika heard something about me yesterday? Did this all happen before I got home yesterday, on that road?)

With a poker-face smile, Sierra turned to Jin.

“I didn't know. You two have already met.”

“We were in the same neighborhood. Onii-chan was really nice, and helped teach me how to study!”

Aika boasted of this, as her eyes twinkled with pride. Sierra turned her gaze towards Jin. She seemed to be smiling nicely, but under it Jin could sense something as though she were telling him “freakin' explain!”

“Well, Araki-kun is so excellent after all.”

“Onii-chan knows everything there is to know about history. Auntie and uncle are both archaeologists.”

“Is that so. Well, in my house there are mountains of lithographs and earthenware, so it would be wonderful if someone could come and explain it to me.”

Sierra pointed towards the corridor. Jin stepped back, realizing what this was about. Yesterday, he had thrown a bunch of cardboard boxes and their contents into the bright gate. Flawlessly, Sierra's eyes were flashing hidden anger.

“Onii-chan, amazing! Sierra-sama is actually asking for your help!”

Hugging both hands to her chest, Aika looked at Jin in admiration. Meanwhile, Sierra's face muscles twitched as she struggled to maintain a smiling face.

“Uhm, is it alright if I come too?”

“No. It's going to be a tough discussion, and I want focus, so it's just for one person. I'm sorry.”

Sierra gently refused Aika's request. Jin's stomach was starting to feel heavy. Yesterday the same situation had unfolded.....

"Ah-no, It's fine Aika! Just wait here with everyone."

Aika drew back obediently. Yet as the two left, Jin's eyes turned to Aika. They seemed to be saying "Help me! "......even though Sierra looked like a wonderful Ojou-sama, she really was more like a demon.

"Well then, over there's fine....."

Amidst her smiling face, she seemed to be saying, "If you say no, I'll eat you," as they moved out into the corridor. Finished with the cupcakes, the boys had taken notice and were raising their upset voices.

"Ah! Zadou's called out Jin!"

"Dang it that Araki, so conceited!"

Upset, Aika cried out at the boys,

"Don't say mean things about Onii-chan!"

Unintentionally she had yelled out in a loud voice. Before Aika had been really shy, so suddenly snapping out like that she had really startled the guys, stopping them in place. Aika was just as surprised with herself, turning beet red and covering her mouth with her hand.

Reaching a stopping point, Sierra had lead Jin around to the back of the gymnasium. There were no windows, and it was in the blindspot of a fence, so nobody would be able to see.

"Well then, here is fine."

Standing before him, Sierra was shaking. The smiling mask from earlier was off, revealing her true anger. Having confirmed his expectations, Jin slumped his shoulders dejectedly.

“You've done well to turn my place into a trash mansion, commoner!”

Sierra jabbed her index finger into Jin's chest. Transfigured in her anger, Jin was pushed by her two hands.

“You're, just completely different from how you were before!”

“Isn't it useless to act cat-like in front of you? But you know my embarrassing secret, so you'll have to disappear.”

“You're still like a cat, with those offensive claws you have.”

“There's no way I'll act like a cat for someone who turns other people's mansions into trash heaps!”

“It couldn't be helped. But I really owe you my thanks, because it kept me from getting kicked out.”

“Well being thankful after I'd left didn't make the satisfaction gauge go up! Useless.”

"That's why, act a little more like a cat for me."

Exhaling, Jin began to worry about his possessions. Sierra didn't seem as angry, causing Jin to think she might have thrown out all the items.

"Then.....what happened to all the stuff?"

Showing her teeth as she turned to answer Jin's question,

"Who knows."

"No way, you threw them out?"

"What would you do if I did throw them away?"

"You threw them away?"

Jin placed his head in his hands. Pouting, Sierra took his arm.

"After that spider came out of that filthy junk, did you think I would just let the stuff lie around in my beautiful room?"

"Hey, hey, hey, what did you do?"

“That junk, you don't need it.”

“Those were my dad and his friend's books!”

Jin shouted. Sierra just gave him a sidelong glance.

“I guess you did say yesterday they were excavated or something. What do your parents do?”

“Why do I have to tell you that.”

“Don't you know the embarrassing secret of me being a Genie of the Lamp? You know my mother and father a bit as well. But since I don't know anything about you, it's not even.”

“Things like equality, that's the problem! Where'd you throw the stuff away?”

“If you don't talk, I won't tell.”

“It's definitely not an interesting story or anything.”

“What are you trying to hide?”

“Not hiding anything.....!!”

Jin had raised his voice. After spontaneously spitting that out, Jin covered his mouth. Sierra simply smiled.

“You're really touchy after all. I'm wanting to hear this more and more.”

“M-My parents story is actually kind of annoying. They're just university Professors. They're both archaeologists studying.....”

“Well well. For an impertinent commoner, it seems your household is pretty elite.”

“I don't know about elite but, the research subsidiary from the country wasn't enough, they had to cover the leftover expenses on their own. They're searching for Solomon's Treasure.”

“Solomon's Treasure?”

Sierra's eyes widened.

“Last year, there was a rumor of its whereabouts, so to pay for the dig, we ended up selling our house where we lived. Because of the excavation, we lost our home and I ended up having to transfer to this school because they have a dorm for the students. Then they gathered up all

the junk in the house, and sent it to the dorm.....geez! There's no money to even rent a storage shed."

Jin seemed to be spitting as he spoke. Listening intently to that story, Sierra's eyes were sparkling, as she moved in on Jin.

"Your problems don't matter. However, about this Solomon's Treasure...."

"I said all this against my will, but what do you mean none of my problems matter?"

"That, it could be a huge treasure right? If it was exchanged in todays market, it could be worth like one-trillion yen right?"

"What's with those stars flying around inside your eyes."

"Afterwards I can leisurely level up as the Genie of the Lamp, and get all the money I want."

"As for money, sweat from your forehead is in your hands, it seems like it's really valuable, huh?"

"That's a commoner's logic."

“Well I just think people going 'money money money' are a bit greedy.”

“That's a good thing you've said but, I'm not interested in arguing the point. So, where is this Solomon's Treasure then?”

“Don't know, that's why it's being searched for.”

Upset with the greedy Sierra, that was all Jin replied with. Looking for his true meaning, Sierra searched his face. Jin noticed how the miniskirt from the maid uniform suited her well, but the school uniform's skirt suited her just as much. If her outward appearance was this graceful, then why.....was her inside like a curse from heaven?

“Really? I'll get a cut of what's taken, you're not deceiving me?”

“It's too late, as it's a bit hazy about what happens after it's found.”

“You're always reading archeology books so, you must be searching for it as well, right?”

"How the heck do you know that I'm always reading archeology books?"

Surprised at Jin's question, Sierra shut her mouth, and becoming red, turned away.

"Th-That's uhm, I hear a lot of gossip from people. All day, people talk about a weird guy that just reads books all the time."

"Well sorry for being weird."

Jin crossed his arms, becoming sullen. It was the first time he had heard it said.

"Solomon was the third king of the people of Israel, around the year 1000 BC. His father was the second king, David."

"David...David as in the statue of David?"

Like the image found in many textbooks, Sierra mimicked the pose of Michaelangelo's statue of David. The pose of David against the Philistines was heroic and soul-stirring, but when Sierra did the pose, she instead looked pretty cute. At a loss as to why he would think

this, Jin pushed it from his mind, continuing on with his story.

"David unified Israel, overcame the surrounding countries, established the Capitol of Jerusalem, and amassed wealth for the kingdom of Israel."

"If that was the second king, then what about the one from the first generation?"

"After Moses led the Israelies out of Egypt, they wanted to have their own king, so the leader then, Samuel, anointed Saul to rule as the first king. David was a servant to Saul, but, after killing a hostile nation's great warrior, Goliath, he became famous, later becoming king after Saul's death. And then to house the ten commandments given by God to Moses, a temple in Jerusalem was built by David's son, Solomon."

"That came out pretty well. You're like a global history teacher."

Sierra complimented Jin after listening to his story. For the normally selfish Sierra to show this attitude, Jin was perplexed.

“Pretty much everyone calls you a weirdo because of those books you're always reading though.”

And, increasing her sarcastic comments, Sierra returned to her usual self.

“What is it. I even spoke nice things to a commoner like you.”

“Solomon received wisdom from God, which led the country to prosperity, with a large palace and loads of acquired treasures.”

“You're being extremely rude by just cutting through what I just said.”

“However, having built the temple small, and bringing in pagan practices and having many concubines and wives, Solomon invited in the wrath of the people, and after his death, Israel divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.”

“So with a small temple and what Solomon gave to God, it wasn't enough? So, giving thanks is important after all, like as we learned from history. You have to show more gratitude to me, commoner.”

“Don't just go along with something to suit your own convenience.”

"Oh? But isn't using history for one's own convenience a common political strategy?"

“How can you say it's so obvious?”

“Well, it's because I'm a person on the side of authority .”

“To separate people into winners and losers, there's so much wrong with that.”

Letting out a tired breath, Jin continued his explanation.

“After the kingdom of Israel divided, the northern kingdom was invaded by Assyria, and the southern kingdom, Judah, was invaded by Babylon, and the citizens were taken as captives. Some time later, they returned from captivity and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem but, after that, the kingdom of Rome came and destroyed it, scattering the people, then World War II, and until Israel was re-founded as it is today, the people wandered as vagrants. In other words, things like

Solomon's Treasure, the 10 Commandments that were kept in the temple, were either taken away by Assyria, Babylon, or the Roman Kingdom, or else were hidden by the exiled Israelies, and it's the location of that hiding place we don't know. Not to mention, for a long time people have also been searching for the 10 Commandments."

"The 10 Commandments were lithographed, weren't they. So they're just stone, I don't care about that."

"You have the Roman history's comprehension, so I must look pretty good."

"Forget that, going back to Solomon's treasure, what kind of stuff is it? Things like money and jewels?"

With her eyes opened wide and sparkling, Sierra brought forth a feverish appearance.

"In the palace, golden tableware was used, and also..... Solomon's ring is really famous."

"Solomon's ring?"

"Written in "Solomon's Collarbone," and also found documented in the text in Arabian Nights, it was the

rarest of all the treasures Solomon possessed. With it one could obtain “Kenryoku.””

“What's Kenryoku?”

“If a person stamped something with it, those orders would be followed, that's its powerful meaning. That's the duty of a seal on a ring. In the old days, when an envelope was sealed, wouldn't the hanko be pushed into candle wax, sealing it? To prevent loss, people in the past would put the hanko into a ring. Using this kind of sealing ring, King Solomon could seal spirits into jars, by closing the jar and stamping it with the hanko, and if he wanted, he could even make the spirit serve him.”

“Serve him, could that mean.....my ancestor was sealed into that lamp by Solomon?”

“My Mom and Dad think Solomon's Treasure is somewhere in the Middle East, and continue to search there. But.....the way I see it, there's a strong line to the treasure being somewhere in Babylonia. Later though, Babylonia flourished into Mesopotamia, which is now current day Iraq, and Mesopotamia's capitol of

commerce is today's bustling center in Baghdad. The original Kugo Harp from there is stored here in the Shōsōin Institute."

The Shōsōin Institute is a building located in Nara near a place known as the Todaiji Temple, a wooden building on stilts. There is a Buddhist statue of an Emperor of Japan and other such things, taken from the Tenpyou Era of the arts.

"In other words, both Babylon and Japan were part of the Silk Road. Iraq and it's neighbor Iran, have glass bowls handed down from ancient day Persia, and the Shōsōin Institute also has the same type of cut-glass bowl recovered from an emperor's tomb. So I think Solomon's Treasure could also have made it to Japan in the same way but.....my father and his team won't even listen to my opinion. What do children know, that a specialist couldn't have already figured out through research, is what they think."

"Well, the Tokugawa buried treasure is pretty pathetic."

"I thought so too when I was little, until I started to read the books my dad would bring back and began

studying archeology. If it was just information, my dad and his team wouldn't lose. That's why, when I started looking for the treasure myself, I was able to discern the information through what my dad and his team had."

After explaining all that to Sierra, Jin sank back into his own thoughts. As Sierra watched him lost in his own thoughts, he seemed to be lost in imagination. His eyes were searching a time and place far from here. Sierra also couldn't begin to guess at that far distant world, yet he lifted the palm of his hand up, looking out over the vivid landscape as if he could see it.

Sierra was looking around absent-mindedly, when she noticed Jin jump out of his thoughts.

"Crap, I was flying around inside my own thoughts again."

"I see.....something like that, it's no wonder you never noticed me."

Unsure why Sierra was relieved with her hand on her chest, and having not heard properly, Jin asked again.

"What did you say again?"

"Ah, it's nothing. For now, it seems like Solomon's Treasure might be in Japan?"

Flustered, Sierra changed the subject.

"I'll help too so, let's go searching! With all the money left in the house we'll hire people, then using infiltration tactics we'll dig, and find it quickly. As for division, I'll get 80% and you can have 20%."

"Wha, don't go deciding stuff yourself!"

"Ownership over lost property, isn't it after half a year whoever finds it keeps it? Solomon never took back his treasure so, it's fine if I find it."

"It's different if someone owns the land, in that case whoever that person is has rights to whatever is dug up."

"Then, we just have to keep the secret from the owner of the land, then go ahead and buy the land. After we get Solomon's Treasure, I won't have to be a maid again!"

"If you could do that, I'd be really grateful too."

"What's with that! I even came as a maid for you, and that's all you got? How rude!"

“You want to be a maid, you don't want to be a maid; which is it!”

After being yelled at by Jin, Sierra stopped her snarling , and shut her mouth.

“Th, that's.....it's obvious I don't want to.”

“But, if you stop being a maid, the magic book will be wiped blank again.”

“The abilities of the genie are handed down to the kids right? If I can be comfortable, I'll just give the Genie of the Lamp to some kid who's pursuing that kind of thing, and leave it in a field or a mountain or something.”

“Your character is just like that of the personality of a Genie.”

“Then it's decided, let's go search for Solomon's Treasure!”

Cheerfully Sierra seemed to be floating while walking, without touching the ground. Jin could only shake his head to the side.

“It's not that simple to find, I've been looking already. Ever since I was in junior high, I was going everywhere during breaks and vacations searching, but there's still nothing to show. Even if we used infiltration tactics, where would you even start.”

“So after all a commoner is pretty unintelligent.”

“What's that!”

“But the magic lamp, hasn't it already crossed the Silk Road? So in other words, Solomon's Treasure should have taken the same route. If we know where the magic lamp came from, we just need to retrace right?”

“Ah.”

Jin looked at Sierra in wonder.

“You know, you're pretty sharp.”

“Heh, that's obvious. It's different when compared to a commoner's intelligence, isn't it?”

“Yeah, pretty much.”

“That sounds nice, so flatter me more.”

“Don't push it!”

Jin pulled a cell phone from his pocket.

“Let me ask my dad. If it's in Japan, then it might have been bought by an antique shop, or lent to a University.”

Shaking, Sierra watched Jin. She just noticed something written at the bottom of the phone screen when, “Power is cut” came out of the phone in a dry, announcer's voice. Surprised, Jin turned his gaze to the phone.

“Power is cut?”

“What about the time difference?”

“It should be around seven in the morning.....they would have woken up, and eaten before the excavation. Actually, in the middle of the excavation there should be a lot of communications, so for the phone to give out, I wonder what happened.”

He tried to contact his mother's cell phone, but this one had the same power failure.

“.....Maybe power can't reach all the way out into the sticks. If that's the case, then it doesn't look like there will be any communication until the excavation is over.”

“When will the excavation be over?”

“When they give up, or find something.”

“But, isn't Solomon's Treasure in Japan?”

“Probably. But, those two definitely won't give up, so they probably won't be coming back for a long time.”

“Then, it'll be an eternity before we can contact them!”

“That's why I've been searching myself. Geez, they have to make life so hard!”

Jin vented his anger out on the gymnasium's wall. Sierra wrapped her arms tightly around herself, staring at Jin. Their circumstances were kind of similar. With such strong willed parents, Sierra could kind of understand Jin's feelings.

“That's why.....it'll work out.”

Sierra said in a soft voice. But as she didn't usually speak softly, it was hard to hear.

“What did you just say?”

“Ah. No that's, uhm, what I mean.....”

Sierra quickly stopped speaking, becoming flustered.

“T-That's - you look like some dead common servant; but to get Solomon's Treasure, we just need to raise the level of the Genie of the Lamp. So, hurry up and call me today as well!”

“W-Wait! Call you, but you can't even do anything!”

“That's right, yes. If I'm called out someplace the public can see, then I'll get a sniper to erase you.”

“Do celebrities intermingle with people in those kind of jobs?”

“Ah, that's right. I forgot the most important thing I had to ask.”

Turning herself towards Jin, Sierra firmly planted her feet.

“I didn't know that you were acquainted with Kasumi Aika.”

“Aah. Yesterday you took her back home in a car right ?”

“She already told you about that?”

Drawing close to Jin, Sierra stared up at him with fierce eyes. For some reason the mood felt rushed. She was facing up, with her large eyes reflecting the light of the sky as she breathed deeply. Afraid of asking what she was thinking, she was pressing against her chest as she swallowed her saliva, preparing her heart for what she wanted to ask.

“Something else.....anything, you didn't hear anything else?”

“Something else?”

“That is.....anything, about myself? Like something I talked about?”

“Nothing, why?”

Unsure as to why he was being drilled to such an extent, and sensing something strange he tilted his head to the side.

“Really?”

Again probing Jin, Sierra had on a scary expression. With her drawn close and calmed down some, Jin shifted away.

“Yeah, it's true.”

“.....I see.”

With a hand to her chest, Sierra let out a breath of relief. Whatever it was, Jin's intuition told him it must be something pretty big. However, for example, if the hiring fees get transferred to the Swiss bank account of that sniper, he might end up with some kind of deadly snake bite, so instead he took the warning and figured that the best thing he could do was to stop asking.

“That's right, yeah. There was one more.”

Sierra pulled a small book out of her pocket. On the back cover of the old-looking book, the stamp of " Harusha Academy Library" was imprinted. Sierra tossed the book to Jin.

"This was in with all the books you abandoned at my place."

"Ah, sorry. I forgot where I'd put that."

Taking the book with both hands, Jin had a premonition.

".....Wait so, you must have looked through all those books."

"Hah. I mobilized the maids, and they organized them into the archives."

"Eh!?"

Surprised, Jin opened his eyes in astonishment.

"I thought you threw them away.....you didn't?"

Sierra was staring at Jin as though trying to bore a hole in him, when she quickly turned her face away.

“Hm, hmpf. Don't get the wrong idea, it wasn't for your sake. It's just that it would be unthinkable for that filthy junk to be thrown away from our house. That good enough!?”

“Either way you still held onto them.”

With all his energy, Jin turned his smiling face towards Sierra.

“It really helped. Thanks.”

Sierra's face turned red. But like blowing out a fire, Sierra returned back to herself, wondering what was next .

“The return date for that book was last week! Just go and return it!”

“Why did you go to MAX TENSION all of a sudden?”

Whatever it was Sierra was thinking about, Jin couldn't read it.

"Anyway, that's that and today you'll call me out as well. A little later!"

Angrily, Sierra left the area by the gymnasium, walked into the school yard, and was noticed by Konoe Ukyou. He had come to the gym wearing his Kendo uniform, for the Noon Kendo Practice, and was casually checking the back entrance to the gym to see if it wasn't locked.

Sierra hadn't seen him, as he had been hidden by the shadow of a tree. With her getting further away, Jin chased after her.

"Wait a minute, what did I say about making decisions by yourself....."

"Araki Jin?"

Surprised, Ukyou had unintentionally raised his voice. Jin turned his own surprised gaze towards him.

"Ah, Dorm Head. Why are you here?"

"That should be my line. What are you doing at the rear of the gym?"

Ukyou gave him a cross-examination, causing a look of tension to cross his face. Since there wasn't much of a threatening attitude, Jin was a bit surprised.

“What am I.....nothing, really...”

“If you weren't doing anything, then why are you even in this remote place! Don't lie to me!”

Ukyou waved his bamboo sword around angrily. He was always angry, but it was the first time Jin had seen the usually level-headed Ukyou with blood pulsing in his face.

“But, I really wasn't doing anything.”

Ukyou was surprised by Jin's response. With that, he turned back into his original self, clearing his throat with a cough.

“W-Well, that's fine then, as long as you aren't trying to smoke secretly. Just like your guys' parents, I have to watch over the lives of each of the boarding students.”

“.....Well, thanks for that.”

Anyhow, thinking that Ukyou's manner was a bit strange, Jin looked at him more in depth. It seemed Ukyou was worried about something, shown by the tone he used, and the sweat he was perspiring. Whatever it was he was worried about, Jin couldn't even place a finger on it.

While Ukyou was in that strange state, two high school first-year girls came over. With short skirts and dyed hair, they made their way over in a skylarking manner. Ukyou turned his gaze, and rose his voice to a shrill pitch.

“Kyaa~, Ukyou was looking over here!”

“Ukyou-sama, we're freshmen from the high school division.....we were thinking of joining a club.”

At this, Ukyou's thin eyebrows lowered.

“.....Do you have any experience with Kendo?”

“Nope, none at all. That's why, we were hoping Ukyou-sama would teach us personally.”

“Yeah, yeah. For dieting, a little bit of sports is good, right?”

Looking at the two obviously flirtatious girls with distaste, Ukyou pulled himself up to his full stature.

“.....Leave. If girls enter, the Dojo will become dirty.”

“Wh-What was that?!”

The girls angrily raised their voices to a shrill pitch. However, in complete dismissal of them, Ukyou took out the key to the gym, and walked into the instructor's room . Turning themselves away, the two lifted their cursing voices.

“What the heck! Even with a good face and money, you're really disappointing!”

“Acting cool saying it's a Dojo, but it's just the gym! If it's the gym, then people are only going to enter for P.E.!”

Jin watched the girls in amazement as they stamped their feet.

(So the rumors about the Dorm Head really are true.)

Jin wasn't really sure, but he thought that according to current trends, the two of them must be pretty cute, yet Ukyou remained calm and collected through the whole

scenario, not even losing his cool for a second. Jin passed from shock into admiration at Ukyou's thoroughness.

Earlier in the morning, Ukyou had called out to Yuuya , mentioning him being in the Light Music Club to chase girls, and to say such a thing gave off a repelling feeling... ...but for the male of marriageable age to continue to protect order in the dorm, it seemed he thought he needed to be that strict all the time.

(If he found out that a girl, Genie of the Lamp as she may be, had trespassed into the dorm.....I surely would have been kicked out without even being able to complain.)

In any case, there's no way I can summon Sierra now... Jin thought.

Just then, the two angry girls turned to Jin, and began venting their anger at him.

“Hey, you over there, what the heck are you looking at !”

“Ah, nothing. I'm just getting up.”

Jin was regretting the fact that he hadn't gotten away earlier.

(I don't get how girls can have mood swings like that, geez this is stuff I'm just not good at.)

Even though Jin was thinking about leaving, the girls had lashed out in a dark mood at whoever was there, and that person was reeling from hunger pains. They weren't even letting him run away. In such a difficult situation, Jin's face contorted.

Heading towards them, came a lone girl from the junior high school. Jin remembered who she was. She was the girl that had been sitting at the counter in the Library Room when he had borrowed the book. For current times, her name was rare as it was simple, so he was able to remember it...She was Honda Satoko, a student in her third year at the Junior High School.

She had dark hair that was quite long. It reached down her back to her waist, and hung low over her eyes, and

because of this long hair, her facial expression was indistinguishable.

“Ku~ku~ku. That's why I didn't say anything, my upperclassmen.”

Adjusting herself, Satoko gave an eerie laugh. Startled, the two girls drewback.

“W-Why did you come out from back there?”

“Do you understand it now? My prediction was correct. So you see it would have been good if you had taken my good luck charm. Kukuku.....”

Satoko again let out her soft chuckle. The two girls glared angrily at her.

“Shut it! No matter how it would have been, the ones that would have dumped that guy who thinks men are superior would have been from this side!”

“You would have dumped him.....All the evidence says that would have been strange...The rejection came from that side didn't it?”

Jin was lost in confusion, watching the two. Things like the last bit of pride of someone rejected, the inexperienced Jin could not understand.

“Thanks for your big meddling! Besides, who would want some disgusting lucky charm for help!”

“Freakin' annoying, let's go!”

With that angry mood, the two headed off. Satoko turned her face to watch them go, looking pityingly after them.

“I should have sprinkled some of my love potion on them.....made from the black powder of a fried black newt.”

“If you put that on someone like them, there's a one-hundred percent chance they would completely hate you.”

Jin spoke in a firm voice. Satoko swung around, stretching out her hand towards Jin.

“Well this is perfect anyway. Senpai, please return that book you borrowed.”

"Ah, s-sorry."

Jin took the book he had in his hand and returned it to Satoko. Taking the book in both hands, Satoko hugged it to her chest with both arms as though it was of extreme importance.

"The check-out time on this book was supposed to be just until last week on Friday. You have to be more careful about delays."

"You remember things pretty well."

Jin blinked his eyes in admiration. The library, used by both the High School and the Middle School, was built separate from the main school buildings. As it was common use, there were a lot of people that would use it, so because of that it was pretty large. Furthermore, whenever the students living at the dorm were free, a lot of times they would borrow a book from the library.

In other words, every day some hundreds of students would come to borrow books. So the fact that someone could remember everything about each of the High

School students who came was really surprising. Thinking “That's right, if it's her memory power...,” Jin turned to ask Satoko a question.

“I'd like to read as much as I can about the text Arabian Nights, so is there anything in the library?”

Thinking about looking up the route the lamp might have taken to reach Japan, this was what Jin asked Satoko. Holding the book to her chest, she tilted her head in thought.

“Arabian Nights? Yes, if it's a request from senpai, then I can search the archives.”

“No, you don't have to, I can look it up myself. The book archives are huge after all. Sorry.”

“It's fine. Just leave it to me, Ku~ku~ku...”

“Wha, why did you start laughing?”

Jin asked with an eerie feeling. In reply, Satoko changed the direction of the conversation.

“Those two were going to confess to the student council president so, I just told them to give up."

The student council president.....that was Ukyou. He was also the dorm head. Certainly he did have a good face, he was also tall, so with just looks, Jin could understand if only a little why the girls all liked him so much.

“But you know, the surviving girls will hate him.”

“For now, that seems to be the case.”

“'For now'.....what's that supposed to mean?”

Satoko didn't listen to Jin's question, ignoring him.

“As for the president's horoscope, the planets are in a bad position, his biorythm is also at its worst, and when the deer bones were put into the fire, cracks of misfortune appeared. So in his current state, the decision to confess came at the worst possible time.”

“Probably, it's just the curse of the deer.”

“All the books in the library about predictions, I've read them all. There is now nothing anymore which I do not know.”

Satoko's words were hard to understand, yet still eerie and mysterious. Slowly raising her hand, she pointed it at Jin.

“That said.....I have already secretly predicted something about you.”

"Why do you suit your own agenda around others?"

"If there is something you desire, let me tell you the consequence. Kukuku....."

Satoko's shoulders were shaking with her laughter. Her eyes were hidden so, her real intention couldn't be see, as only a light smile surfaced on her lips. Jin, who was never one to get too agitated, found himself shivering all along his back.

"No, it's fine. It'll work out somehow."

"My predictions are correct you know.....Kukuku."

While laughing in a humble voice, she had stuck some kind of paper onto Jin's back. Shocked, he peeled the paper off. On it, some kind of strange charm was written on it. As a blood vessel showed itself on Jin's temple, he glared at Satoko with twitching eyebrows.

"Hoy, just what did you, what kind of incantation is that?"

"Ah, you found out? Don't worry about it."

"It's an impossible probability."

"Do you have pain in your collarbone?"

Shocked at what Satoko had just said, Jin lifted his hand to press against his left shoulder.

"For that person as well, I was waiting eagerly..... Kukuku."

"What's with that "kukuku" gibberish? Anyway, don't stick weird things on me!"

Thrusting his finger before Satoko, Jin began letting fly a flurry of words. Smiling, Satoko turned herself towards Jin's back, waving goodbye by fluttering her hands.

"Kukuku.....I understand now. Please use the library again. Ku~kukuku."

Holding the book to her chest, she continued to smile as she gave her farewells.

With the keys in hand, Ukyou came back from the gymnasium. Seeing Satoko standing there fixedly, he gave a start.

"W-What is a girl doing out in a place like this! There are no girls allowed in the Kendo Club!"

"It is okay. After all, I am not planning on joining a club." Satoko said, standing firmly before Ukyou.

Though with her eyes hidden, it was impossible to tell where she was looking, or what she was thinking. Ukyou also picked up on the eerie feeling, and drew back a step.

"W-Well then...what are you doing? With girls loitering around, it'll be a distraction during practice, so hurry up and disappear!"

"Understood. Ku~ku~ku."

"What are you laughing at!"

In disregard of Ukyou near hysterics, Satoko headed off.

"...In the middle school, huh. There's someone I don't know. Because of this, stuff like that weird girl....."

Ukyou took a deep breath to release his disdain. But, suddenly lifting his face, and leaning on his shinai as though it were a walking stick, he looked off towards a place that couldn't be seen, and just stood like that for quite some time.

Chapter 3: Letter from the Desert

On the way back home that day, Jin and Yuuya stopped by the restaurant on the back of the school, Alf Layla.

Alf Layla was a restaurant for special Persian dishes. But, because the shop was catering to the current fashionable female university students, the ethnic atmosphere wasn't as large.

Even so, the shop had not changed into just a place to go for cheap meals. There were tables, chairs, and counter seats, and above the table stood chopsticks, and on the wall there was an unskillfully written menu hanging.

“W~elcome!”

Jin and Yuuya, as they opened the door and entered the shop, were greeted by a waitress with a powerful, pleasant voice. She was a girl with darkish skin, and precisely bound golden hair. The only daughter of the shopkeeper, she was Alf Shamshir.

“The attractive shop girl Alf. Cute right? You know she's the same age as us.”

In the kitchen, the shopkeeper with dark skin and black hair was joggling the frying pan, as his counterpart, Alf, with her golden hair, was grilling some meat for shishkabobs. Directing Jin to a seat at the counter, Yuuya lifted his voice to the shopkeeper.

“Hey Unks, I'd like to put today's order on a tab, is that alright?”

“Watch it ya bloody fool. I'm young and my stomach's still small, so don't be calling me 'Unks'!”

An authoritative shopkeeper, he answered like a true Tokyoite. Yuuya sat in his seat, turning to talk to Jin.

“By the way, your little sister is still pretty cute herself you know.”

“She's not my sister, just a kid from my old neighborhood.”

“Whatever it's all the same. If you compare them to Zadou, they're still just acorns.”

"Who are you calling an acorn!"

Alf came over, hitting Yuuya on the head with a silver tray. In a strong mood, her lips were bound together in a straight line. Pressing his head, Yuuya let out a shout.

“That freakin' hurts! That's why I said they were different, Zadou isn't as tomboyish as this.”

“You think so?”

Jin let out what he was thinking. Yuuya turned to glare at him.

“What's up with your question!”

“Ah, no. Nothing really.”

What happened yesterday was a secret. There's no way he could tell anyone. With his sense of duty, there

was no way Jin was going to talk. Nearly spitting, Yuuya was shaking his fists as he dropped his claim.

“Listen up, Jin. It looks like you've got another opinion but, there's no room for you to doubt her gentle kindness . Well, there's not really any proof that she's reached perfection, but something like that is fine, isn't it? There's no dignity in dragging down such a girl. Don't you think so?”

“Nope. I've never gone out with a girl up till now after all.”

At Jin's response, Yuuya clutched his hand to his chest.

“.....Ah, I see.”

“Since the past I've never really cared much about girls . It's a bit different from you, as you're always listening to music and stuff to learn more about them and stuff.”

“Nah that's...”

Struggling for words, Yuuya spoke in a small voice.

“Actually for me too.....as I've never gone out with someone before...”

“Eh!? Is that how it is?”

Under Jin's shocked gaze, Yuuya grew red, turning angry.

“Don't friggin' stare at me like that!”

“What, you want me to stare at you with a fuzzy warm look?”

“Besides that, during lunch break, you taught Zadou archeology? So what kind of thing is she interested in?”

“A-Ahh. That's.....”

“You can tell me. There's no way it's a secret is it? If everyone in class finds out there's a secret between just you and Zadou, they'll hang you from jealousy.

“No. There's absolutely positively no way it's anything good like that.”

Jin affirmed his earlier denial. Familiar with his mannerisms, Yuuya placed his hand on Jin's shoulder, preparing to ask again.

"Well then, tell me. Even though I listen to light music to try to understand women, it hasn't worked at all. Since I'm interested in Zadou, I feel like I've got to do my best."

"I see. It deals with the ancient silk road, and how goods would be....."

"Zzzz."

"You went to sleep pretty quickly."

Jin looked at Yuuya, with his head lying prostrate on the counter, in surprise. At that moment, Alf came over to the place where they were, roughly setting down their cups of water.

"Look here, if you're going to sit, then place your orders already! Else the shop's routine is going to be interrupted."

Looking surprised, Jin turned his gaze up to look at Alf.

"Your Japanese is great. Just like a true Tokyoite."

“Well that's obvious. I was born and raised here after all.”

“Hey, Young'un! It's way too early for ya to be flirtin'! If you lay a hand on my daughter, you'll be gettin' a surprise in your curry!”

Alf's father could multi-task quite well, shouting those things while still managing to keep the frying pan going. Yuuya turned to speak to Jin.

“The owner was born after his parents came to Japan. “The third generation will continue as a Tokyoite,” is something he's said as well. And that third generation is Alf.”

“You two, what are you going to do about your order? ”

With her hand on her hip, Alf had asked Jin. All Yuuya could do was laugh.

“Even if you ask what we're going to do, without the menu there isn't much we can do, right Jin? Naan and shish kebab sound like some kind of incantation. With that said, two shish kebab specials please.”

After making his order, Alf responded by restating it.

“Understood, two special shish kebabs!”

Next, she began putting the servings of rice on two plates. When the meat on skewers was being grilled on the gridiron, Jin turned a curious gaze over to watch.

“So there was a Persian restaurant this close after all.....”

He began looking around the shop. Just like Yuuya had said, the restaurant did indeed have a lot of cheaper dishes, and it really was full of classmates from Harusha Academy.

“The wait's over! Here's the two sets of shish kebab!”

With some force, Alf set the tray down before Jin and Yuuya. On top of the large plate, was a donburi bowl filled with a mountain of rice, on top of which was spread the beef skewers, which was spiced with a curry smell. There were even true green vegetables. There was also a tomato stew to top it all off.

“Excellent. Amazing,” is all Jin could utter in his overwhelmed state. Yuuya was already digging in.

“In the grilled chicken bowl, there's even salad and miso soup. It was the same for me when I was in middle school and a senior took me here, I was extremely nervous thinking about this place being a foreign restaurant. But since the food from the middle east is soft , you can use chopsticks to eat it.”

Jin picked up his skewer, covered with meat. The mix of herbs and spices was combined to form a miraculous flavor. After the teeth bit into the meat, the flavors in the condensed bullion were released.

“SUPERB!”

Jin screamed out his thoughts. Even though he had never seen the endless Arabian sands, the images seemed to surface on the inside of his eyelids. Due to the added smell of the salt used, it seemed to draw out a feeling of the flavor of rock salt. Standing with a caravan of camels in the desert, were the ruins of an ancient city in the sand .

So that's the kind of place my parents are working at....., Jin thought to himself.

(Solomon's Treasure huh...I wonder where it could be...)

Jin was thinking deeply as he savored the meal. Jin's parents were searching with many archaeologists and adventurers, but had yet to find anything. The treasure had yet to be found. The last resort he could see, was only in thinking about the birthplace of the magic lamp which was Sierra's, that, and the fact he didn't know what else to do as he couldn't contact his parents. At his wits ends, Jin could only cradle his head in his arms.

Just then, a plate was placed in front of him. It was a massive omelet with spinach inside.

"I'll be leaving this with you~"

Jin quickly tried to hand the plate of omelets back to Alf, only to have her shake her head and push the omelets back towards him.

"That's my treat. Haha, the Persian Wind Omelets."

“Your treat.....why?”

“The spinach has a lot of nutrients in it. It's something that was carried over from Persia along the Silk Road here to Japan. Since you mentioned the Middle East, and the Japanese culture is thought to have been graced with a great deal from there.”

“But, I'm eating on credit, so how can you give me something like this?”

“It doesn't disturb the business to keep the mood in the shop bright.”

Alf puffed out her cheeks while crossing her arms. The muscles in Jin's face were twitching rapidly.

“Sorry. It's really delicious, it's just I had to think for a bit.”

“Don't worry, I'm a girl yet I couldn't explain very well . But what you said earlier, actually made me really pleased with you.”

Raising his finger to point at Jin, Yuuya smacked his head on the tray, causing Alf to turn a bit red.

“Don't say weird things to this dope!”

“Quit hitting me with each and every tray! This isn't Yoshimoto Shinkigeki!”

Rubbing his face Yuuya drew himself towards Alf, and indicating Jin's thumb, he pushed it into Jin's mouth.

“If it's Jin...You know he's a weirdo, it's like he's always looking up stuff about the Middle East. Until yesterday, our dorm room was stuffed full of book after book about that stuff. And since he likes the Middle East so much, he must like Alf too.”

“Don't say such stupid stuff! You're troubling her!”

Jin scolded Yuuya seriously. But, surprised, Alf rested her elbow on Jin's shoulder.

“Heeeh, so you've got some interest in the Middle East .”

“Not really. You say interest but.....it's just thinking about if the magic lamp from Arabian Nights could have made it to Japan.”

After Jin's statement, both Alf and her Father's faces froze, followed by a stiffening expression.

“N-N-N-N-N-No way. That's just talk right? Right Dad?”

Looking a bit confused, Alf turned the direction of her speech to the shopkeeper. He also turned a cold shoulder on the conversation.

“T-T-T-T-T-That's right, bloody fool! What's up with ya? Something like a lamp from Arabia having a Genie of the Lamp come rumbling out, you believe that?”

“Jin, even though you're always thinking and studying about archeology, you're still thinking about stuff like that? Unexpectedly, you're pretty childish.”

Yuuya was bouncing around in his laughter. Jin simply put his elbows on the table, crossed his fingers, and though about how disappointing it was.

“I see...no matter how many Middle Eastern people there are, they don't know after all. If it's a Japanese person, there's no way anybody would know anything about a wicked pedestal.”

“U, uhm...that there was a magic lamp in Japan, who did you hear that from?”

Calmly, Alf took hold of both of Jin's shoulders, and enquired of him with serious eyes. Because what had happened between Sierra and him was a secret, Jin could only shake his head in negation.

“It's fine. I'm sorry for asking about such a strange thing.”

“Ah, it's fine, don't worry don't worry. For us too, we're sorry we couldn't be of more use.”

Even though Alf ended it like that, Jin suddenly noticed something for the first time, and sniffed at his surroundings. Becoming a bit worried, Jin asked about it.

“You smell something?”

“Ah, no. It's nothing.”

Sniffing quickly, Alf turned to her side. Just then Jin was elbowed by Yuuya.

“You know, it's probably because off all the garbage in the dorm room, so you just smell like mold.”

“I wonder if it's an outbreak of a new life-form.”

Someone like Jin, who always cares about his manners, to be wearing dirty clothes that hadn't been washed, was completely unthinkable. Yuuya sniffed at Jin's surroundings, simply saying “Ahh.”

“Isn't this the smell from the Dorm Head?”

“Ah, you mean that whatever it's called incense?”

In the morning, when Ukyou had gripped Jin's collar, the incense he was wearing had probably been captured by Jin. Alf, who couldn't have thought of this, was taking this in stride.

“That's right. It's that smell, that smell. Ah, while I've been talking, you've already finished eating everything. You know, you eat pretty quick.”

Alf was looking at Jin's plate. There was nothing left. Yet on Yuuya's plate, there was still at least half of his meal left. Jin's reply came as he took a swig of water.

“Really, I don't think I eat all that fast.”

“It's fast, fast, yet you're still so thin even with your gluttony.”

Come to think of it, when he had gone searching for Solomon's Treasure on a day off and gone mountain climbing and excavating, he had gotten really hungry from using his stamina, so he might have to eat more than others.....Thinking so, Jin pushed against his stomach. Yuuya spoke while he was still chewing a mouthful of shish kebab.

“This shop, fits you doesn't it? The food tastes good, it's not too expensive.....Next time how about we challenge that extra large Persian Curry? If you can eat it within 30 minutes, it's free. That right, Alf.”

With Yuuya's statement finished, Alf had been engrossed in sniffing with her nose around Jin, when her body started to shake.

“A-Ahh. That's a delicious scent.”

“Delicious?”

Wondering what she was talking about suddenly, Jin lifted his eyebrows in puzzlement. Giving a short start, Alf proceeded to shake her head.

“Ah, no. I just misspoke.”

“Alf, you're drooling.”

Being pointed at by Yuuya, Alf quickly shut her mouth . It was kind of suspicious.

“Ah, that's right. What you said about coming to eat again, it can't be today,” said Alf as she focused her attention onto Jin.

Rubbing his stomach, Yuuya could only shake his head.

“It's alright, today's fine as it is. Anymore and we'll get fat.”

“I wasn't talking to you. So Jin, won't you come to eat again today?”

Alf's waitress side was so developed. Different from how she had curtly given him the omelets earlier, she used the voice of a cat, and a mysterious smell was coming from her body.

It would be his evening meal, so he wanted to go on eating more and more, but he couldn't eat too much on credit, he had also received quite a lot of shish kebab, so he wouldn't be able to really fit much else into his stomach. So showing his restraint, Jin shook his head.

“I'm good with today as well.”

“Well, if you say you won't eat anymore. Our Persian Curry is made with pomegranates so they will restore your energy, and you can eat as much as you'd like.”

“To someone eating on credit, to make a recommendation like that...”

“It's fine. Isn't that right Dad.”

Alf raised her voice so it would carry to the kitchen, following which a response came from the shopkeeper.

“Yep. If that's what Alf said, then eat as much as you'd like. Bloody Fool!”

“Yeah, like he said, so you don't have to show restraint . So eat to your hearts desire, and become round round fat.”

"Round round fat, what's with that?

A part of what Alf had just said was strange. Before Jin could think too hard about it, Alf had already stretched out her arms deceivingly.

"Ah, ah, no you don't need to worry about it. So, come over tomorrow for some more great service!"

Alf was laughing sweetly. For her to not smile.....was unthinkable, indeed whatever it seemed, her habit was her smiling face. But there was something else besides her smiling face that Jin had become conscious of, looking like he wanted to reply, he was stuck on her chest, unable to say anything.

After returning to the dorm, Jin checked his cell phone for any messages, but in the end nobody had called.

"After all, nobody returned my call. Just where are they fooling around at."

There were plenty of times when he would get a call and he wouldn't answer, but for them not to pick up when he wanted to call, Jin was a bit worried.

Flipping the phone shut, Jin tossed it onto the upper bunk-bed. In order for the dorm to maintain order, they had a dress code to wear gym clothes, as the dorm had chosen the uniform for the exercise club, so that's what he and Yuuya were unwillingly wearing. Unaffiliated with the exercise club, Jin and Yuuya were wearing their gym clothes. Yuuya was wearing his shorts, while Jin had on his jersey. While looking at a music score for a guitar on the bed, he lifted his gaze to the clock on the wall.

“It's five-thirty, about time for dinner, Jin, you hungry?”

“.....Starving. Even though I ate so much at Alf Layla...”

“As expected of a glutton, you have quite some fast digesting skills. Anyway, what if you went on a diet for just today?”

Thinking like a stranger, Yuuya was laughing lightly. However, until breakfast the next day, it would be over 12 hours, which he didn't think he could make. There were no archeology books either, so there was nothing to read as well. He also didn't have the willpower to do his homework. Feeling a pang in his stomach, Jin let out a sigh.

At that moment, someone knocked on the door. Standing up from the bed, Yuuya went to answer it.

“Yes?”

Standing there was a first year middle school student. The number one lowest in regards to the Senpais, he wasn't even trembling.

“Hey, weren't you that first year handing out onigiri this morning?”

Bowing his head, the boy came into the room.

“I'm Himuro Keita. Araki Senpai, there's a letter that came for you.”

“Letter? Aah, thanks.”

Keita handed the letter to Jin, who was sitting up on his bed. With a tone of admiration, Yuuya spoke to him.

“You've got some guts to come in here not scared. Something like delivering a letter to a Senpai's room, usually people would be pretty scared, and just wait in the hallway or something.”

“But, in order to follow the dorm rules to not have something lost or stolen, all private letters and the like have to be relayed quickly to whoever they're made out to. That's what the dorm head is always saying.”

“Hah? Wait a minute...Himuro.....the vice president of the student council?”

“That's right. Eriko is my older sister.”

“Ah, so that's why you've got guts.”

At that, Keita turned a stern gaze on Yuuya.

“I am not hiding or likewise taking profit from the shadow of my sister! Even though you're my Senpai, if you talk like that, I won't forgive you!”

“S-Sorry sorry. I didn't mean to say something so light, so don't get so mad.”

“Well then, please pardon my intrusion.”

Once more lowering his head, Keita left the room. With that Yuuya let out a sigh.

“Geez geez, it's so hard to get along with that honor student type, their prides are so high and all. Doesn't he look like his older sister, Jin?

“I'm not sure, I don't know his older sister after all...”

“Aah, that's right it's impossible to ask you anything about girls. But I can ask you stuff about cuneiform writing can't I?”

“I'd be more helpful with something like that.”

“It's a joke. Who'd ask about that stuff.”

“The oldest cuneiform written laws were Hammurabi's Code.”

“The Student Council Vice President's name is Himuro Eriko. She's famous for holding down a job now to help cover living costs. After getting permission from the school, she goes to a part-time job after class.”

Matching himself to Jin's pace, Yuuya explained it all.

“But apart from that, what's the letter about?”

“Ah. Uhm.....”

Jin turned his gaze back towards the envelope. It had a stamp from abroad stuck to it, and the address was even written in English. The paper was rough, and the quality wasn't that high, and with it's scent, it gave off a very ethnic feel. There was also 'Global Express' stuck to the paper. It's postmark date was labeled as a week previous. Written cursively and with a blue fountain pen's ink, the name [Daigo Araki] was clearly written.

“It's from my Dad!”

He had just been thinking about his parents as well, so the timing for the letter was really surprising. On the letter in the blue fountain pen ink, was definitely his Dad's handwriting.

To Jin.

Are you doing well? Since we started the excavation over here, half a month has already passed. We met up with a guide named Sawaad, and he had some reliable information about Solomon's Palace. When the preparations are done, we'll enter the excavation phase tomorrow. It seems like a place where there's no cell phone service, so for a while we won't be able to communicate, but don't worry. It was good we got the satellite phones for your mom, but with the service now she's pretty upset.

Every day your mom worries about you. She's not too sure about life at a dorm, so as to whether you're eating right or not, she's pretty worried.

For me as well, because I don't have the extra funds, I'm causing you a lot of trouble, which I'm sorry for. It's fine if you're mad at us. With all that said, currently in regards to the progress of finding Solomon's Treasure,

At that point the letter began turning into a romance play, so Jin took it, put it back in its envelope, and put that in his shirt pocket. Suiting his own convenience... The contents of the letter just made him angry.

"That's right, you cause me nothing but trouble. You think I wanna hear your excuses?"

With Jin in his elevated anger stage, Yuuya raised his voice to speak.

"With a mood like that, is it Haraheri's fault? Sorry if it's in Haraheri, but I'm heading to the dining hall now."

"Already? It's still pretty early though."

"Well, to not have my seat taken, and to get one close to the upper classmen, I can't afford to wait. Well, I'm off solo to go eat chicken soup, beef and miso, but don't feel bad."

"Then don't give out the menu!"

With that Jin's stomach gave a hungry growl. Laughing maliciously, Yuuya exited the room. How was he supposed to live off just a cupcake.

"...Geez, what a bad personality."

Trying to figure out what to do about his hunger, he remembered the letter. Though Jin sincerely believed Solomon's Treasure was in Japan, he couldn't help but

recall the lines written that said, “We've obtained some reliable information dealing with Solomon's Palace.”

“What does that mean? That it's different from my hypothesis? Just how reliable is the information?”

Thinking to read the letter all the way through this time, he reached his hand into his pocket to take it out.

At that moment, Jin's cell phone began vibrating. Everyday between school and the dorm, there was practically no free time, so their cellphones were always set to silent mode.

Maybe it's from my parents... thinking that, Jin picked it up. It might have to do with something like telling him directly about Solomon's Palace. That's why, when he heard Sierra's voice, he was extremely disappointed.

“...What, it's just you.”

“[W, what do you mean by that!]”

From the very beginning Sierra was already filled with rage. With all that energy it seemed the cellphone's speaker might break. Jin let out a sigh.

“You're already in top gear.”

“[I already told you to call me! What the heck are you doing!?]”

“Don't ask for the absurd. School ends at three, and the dorm doesn't close until six, so there's no way I could call you right?”

“[I heard from your roommate Utada Yuuya, that you'd be missing dinner, so you should be alone now, right?]”

Shocked, Jin couldn't come up with a reply. She was unexpectedly sharp.

“So... did you get my phone number from him as well?”

“[You idiot, if I did that it would turn into a misunderstanding. When I saw your phone at noon break, your number was written on it, right?]”

Shocked again, Jin looked at his phone. Written beneath the LCD screen in thin magic marker was his phone number.

“[A lot of commoners do that. Because there's a lot of people who get their phone number from the company.]”

Sierra laughed with her nose. Above her intelligence was little she would overlook. She gave off the impression of someone in a secluded world, but in reality it was completely different. Another way of thinking is that she doesn't understand the world, but that's not it either. It was a misrepresentation of herself as a humble person, when it was realized how she really acts.

“...That's right. Right now I'm in the room alone, and Yuuya won't be back until seven.”

“[Since it's in a room, and there's no chance of someone seeing me in the maid uniform, then it should be safe. So hurry up and rub the lamp.]”

“The word Genie really does suit you perfectly.”

“[That's rude! Where does that fit me!]”

“It's obvious, 'evil spirit' and 'god' are what make up the symbols for 'Genie' after all.”

To not continue riding on the mood, Jin got off his bed, went over to the desk and pulled the lamp out from one of the drawers, hitting his hand in the process.

“Ah, that's right! Hey, Zadou.”

“[Don't put off calling me, commoner!]”

“More importantly, stop calling me a commoner.”

“[You need something?]”

“When you come, could you bring something with you? Is there any kind of food you could come with?”

Thinking to himself what a good idea he'd had, he asked for Sierra's help. On the other side of the phone, Sierra let out an 'I see' sound.

“[That's a good idea. I'll come soon with something made. Then I won't have to do anything, and you'll thank me tons, right?]”

"Ah, of course! I'll be sure to give you loads of thankfulness."

It was Hell. Jin said this as he pushed his hand against the rumblings his stomach was making.

"[Then after ten minutes rub the Magic Lamp. You got that?]"

"Ahh, you've let me reach ultimate happiness today."

Holding the Magic Lamp on his knees, Jin was unusually calm and when he turned to the clock on the wall trembling in anticipation, five minutes had already passed.

The waiting time was long, and the sounds of his empty stomach were painful to hear. And so another five minutes passed. After waiting so long, Jin took the lamp and began scrubbing it frantically. With a popping sound , a violet smoke came out from the lamp. There Sierra stood in her maid clothes, holding a bowl with an unknown number of eggs in it.

"Bow down commoner! Before the almighty Matsusaka Beef Sukiyaki!"

“Yahooo!”

Even with Sierra shouting insults, before his hunger they paled in comparison. Lifting both hands Jin was about to go 'Banzai!' when he suddenly opened his eyes wide, looking at Sierra in front of him.

“....uh, so where is the sukiyaki?”

“Huh?”

Sierra looked around her feet. There an iron pot was spread out with a tiny portable gas stove, but that was all .

“Wh, what's this mean? It was definitely here, the finished sukiyaki! There was also some rice definitely in here as well...”

“Well there isn't anything but ingredients and cooking tools. So to raise your magic level...maybe you have to cook yourself?”

Jin shook his head as he looked at the raw egg. Sierra stuck her fist worriedly by her mouth.

“Cooking. What a problem...”

“Don't you have any cooking practice from home economics class?”

“The people that are in my group always end up doing it for me. They keep saying since I'm an idol I shouldn't have to do that stuff.”

“Being pampered goes to show that you can't do something for yourself.”

“Well, just wait until I get started. Then I'll let you try the cooking I have pride in.”

“How can you have pride when you can't cook anything...?”

Jin raised his eyebrow at the mystery. Laughing lightly , Sierra withdrew her cellphone from out of her apron's pocket.

“Ah, hello? Yeah, it's Zadou Sierra. I was wondering if I could have the usual pizza delivered?”

“You mean it's delivered pizza!”

Heatedly Jin took the phone away from Sierra.

“Food that gets delivered is banned here, so if a Pizza Store delivered here, they'd be chased off!”

“That's fine, we can just have them deliver it through the window.”

Sierra snatched back her cellphone. With an “ahh,” Jin clapped his hands.

“You're pretty smart.”

“Isn't that obvious. Don't compare me with a commoner like you.”

“I thought you were supposed to be nice and happy when you get praised.”

“How's that supposed to be when I get praised by some commoner like you!”

“[Uhm...Is anybody there?]”

A voice could be heard from the phone's speaker. With a soft girls voice that sounded quite grown up, the speaker still seemed to be quite young.

"Ah, I apologize. Then please give me the usual deluxe pizza. Ah, and the place of delivery is different than usual. Harusha Academy's Male Dormitory, do you know of it?"

"[Tachibana....is that it?]"

"Yes yes, Tachibana."

"[Uhm, Tachibana shouldn't have any girls allowed inside...]"

"You know it pretty well. And so I'm in a room on the second floor of the Tachibana dorm, and to not be noticed by some stranger, I would like it if the pizza could be delivered in through the window."

"[W-Window?.....I don't think we can do that...]"

The operator on the other side of the phone seemed to be grinding her teeth as she talked. It wasn't unreasonable to assume it had something to do with the phone call having come from a girl in the the no-girls-allowed, all-male dormitory.

“[Well then, as for your order, if it's the same as always....that's the fourteen inch large size, with truffle, caviar, and foie grass as topings, correct?]”

“Yeah. Also...”

From behind Sierra's shoulder, Jin impatiently interrupted.

“Hey, I'm just asking to make sure but...you do have money right?”

“Ridiculous. When ordering high class food at a restaurant, 'Is there any money in the wallet?' is something only those destined to be poor would ask.”

Snickering lightly from her nose, Sierra reached her hand into the pocket of her apron.

“.....eh!?”

Her hand felt only emptiness. There was nothing there at all. Turning her pocket inside out, still nothing came out.

"NO WAY! Where's my wallet!? Before I was called out I took every precaution to make sure there would be enough money to cover whatever expenses might show up!"

"So from the beginning you were just thinking of using money anyway."

"When I passed through the lamp, my clothes did turn into the maid uniform but...that it would disappear as well! Aaah geez! What an annoyingly useless lamp!"

Sierra kicked the lamp in her fury. Sierra followed the rebounding lamp with her eyes as it fell back down. With a clang, she was beat down onto the bed after being hit in the head. Her figure upon kicking it was splendid, with her leg raised over her head. Though at the same time the skirt she was in lifted up high as well.

Jin heatedly slapped his hands over his eyes, turning himself around quickly. Screaming "Kyaa!" and sitting up hurriedly so she was kneeling with the tops of her feet touching the ground, Sierra pushed down on the skirt with one hand while using the other to hold the back of her head.

“You saw it didn't you, Commoner! My head hurts! You saw it!”

“Wh, who saw what!? You were the one who fell by yourself!”

Jin turned back around again, while still holding his hands over his eyes. The operator on the other side of the phone spoke in a worried voice.

“[Uhmm, hello...? Just now there was some kind of loud noise but, how about your order?]”

“It can't be helped. For today, you'll be the one to get it .”

Sierra said this with her finger pointed at Jin.

“Why do I have start going with what you say all of a sudden?”

“If it's a little bit it should be fine right, besides I'll return it at school tomorrow.”

“Even if you say that, right now, I've got no money.”

“You don't even have fifty-thousand yen?”

“There's no way I'm gonna have that! Rather, there's no way one person could plan to eat that much pizza!”

With all his heart Jin was trying to relay this fact of common life to Sierra. Covering her mouth, Sierra seemed to be in distress.

“I, it can't be helped then...There's nothing to do but cancel...”

“[Cancel?]”

Even though the operator asked only for the sake of confirmation, Sierra went into a frenzy with her hair seemingly on end, as she turned to the phone.

“I'll tell you one thing though, I'm not canceling because I have no money! There's no way that would happen to someone like me!”

“[I, I didn't say anything though...]”

“To prove it I'll be ordering one-hundred pizzas tomorrow! All of them are going to be double caviar!”

While still fuming Sierra cut the call. Amazed, Jin opened his mouth to speak.

“Even double cheese is over extravagant....but to not just order caviar which they wouldn't normally have anyway, but to order double caviar...”

“Not having money really is humiliating.”

Heartbroken, Sierra fell back onto the bed. Jin clapped his hand onto Sierra's shoulder.

“You didn't actually fall too low you know. After all, there are quite a few times when people will buy too much at a super market, and have to say 'Sorry but, could you please return this and that,' at the register.”

“That's humiliating! In the end there's just no way I can stand to be poor. And for now, there's no other way than for me to raise my level as a Genie!”

“You just have to wait until we find Solomon's Treasure.”

The route was still being read but, according to the letter his parents had sent, it seemed they had uncovered some historic ruins that had a connection with Solomon. Sierra's expression and silence exceeded his expectations, though it didn't continue for long.

“That's because, there's no guarantee when we'll find Solomon's Treasure right? If we wait like that and it takes too long, I don't want to see my parents get divorced. Because of that, I have no choice but to be the Genie of the Lamp.”

Sierra was grasping him firmly. Because of the courage she showed, Jin couldn't help but stroke her head. When Aika was little, after something good happened, or after something that made her cry sadly, “Big Brother” Jin would always stroke her head like this. Stroking her head like that, Aika would always end up showing a happily smiling face. That's why he just reflexively started stroking her head...but Sierra wasn't Aika. One moment blinking in surprise, the next, not understanding what was happening and becoming angry, she turned her scarlet face towards Jin.

“What do you think you're doing all of a sudden!”

“Ah, just...”

“Even if you do that when I haven't done anything, It won't raise my level as a Genie you know! A commoner like you, don't go touching my head like that!”

“So, the satisfaction gauge won't go up if I just rub your head then?”

“That's unavoidable! Don't do useless things!

“Useless...”

“Don't you have any kind of order or something?”

Sierra spoke forcibly to Jin. In the end, with his stomach making rumbling noises, he just wanted something to eat.

“I've said it before already, that I'm hungry. But since there's nothing to eat, there's no helping it.”

“Even so, if you don't have anything to tell me to do, it's going to bother me.”

Saying that.....Sierra dropped her gaze to the raw eggs she was holding.

“That's it then, it'll be fine as long as I can make an omelet! Luckily there's also a gas stove.”

“Ah, I get it. You'll fry the egg using the iron pot.”

Jin's eyes were sparkling. With a similar happy appearance, Sierra took Jin's hands.

“I know I know! I might just be a genius!”

“With this, I just might be able to make it the twelve hours until tomorrow's breakfast!”

At the same time, the atmosphere turned chilly and quiet as they realized they were hand in hand. Following which they quickly let go. Jin turned to the side looking like he had done something wrong, as Sierra turned her back to him, her face deep scarlet.

“Any, anyway, today I'll have you make the satisfaction gauge go all the way up! I don't want to spend any more time than I have to each day in this dirty place!”

Setting the portable gas stove atop the bed, Sierra lit the flame with a cracking sound. *While she’s frying up the omelet, I wonder if I should take the time to read the rest of the letter...* Jin thought, as he reached his hand into shirt pocket, preparing to take the letter out.

However,

“How would you like it fried? Medium, Rare, or Well-Done?”

Jin scrunched his eyebrows at Sierra's strange question .

“Isn't that how you would cook a steak?”

Rare is when the meat is still relatively pink, Medium is when you use a moderate amount of heat, and most of the pink is gone, while Well-Done is when there is no pink left in the meat, because of leaving on the flame for a long time. He watched as Sierra put three eggs still in their shell into the iron pot above the gas stove, to “fry” them.

“What are you doing?”

In a voice not usually used, Jin had spoken in a tone that was an octave higher than usual.

“It's obvious from watching that I'm frying eggs.”

Sierra replied in a matter of fact tone, as she began to poke the eggs.

“Idiot! Stop it! The eggs will explode, it's dangerous!”

Grabbing her shoulders from behind, Jin pulled Sierra back away from the gas stove. A girl's shoulder width was narrow, and so she fit easily between his hands. Completely dubious about Sierra's cooking method, Jin could only be suspicious.

“You don't want the satisfaction gauge to go up? Don't get in the way of my cooking.”

“Just how is this cooking!”

“Sure it's an omelet, though it may not be what you're used to, but it's actually much more difficult to make than you'd think by watching.”

“This conversation seems like something from a different dimension.”

“I am an idol, so this different dimension is because you're a commoner, right?”

“Don't try to explain it like that! This isn't an omelet, and it doesn't seem like cooking either!”

Turning off the flame of the gas stove, Jin recovered the eggs from the pot. Taking off his jacket, he put them together on the back of a chair at the study desk, leaving him dressed casually in a short-sleeved shirt.

“Listen up, if you're going to make an omelet, you first have to actually crack the egg.”

Next, Jin took the egg and cracked it along the side of the bowl and put the yoke in. Sierra seated herself on her knees, watching attentively the cooking lesson.

“You want to mix the white part and the yellow yoke together, but not too much or it will become hard, so mix lightly. Then, add some sugar for taste, heat up the pot, top it off with some oil, and then put in the eggs...”

He had sugar and oil for cooking. If it was just omelets , Jin's skill was pretty good. Impressed, Sierra clapped her hands together as she continued watching.

“Heh, it's unbelievable how you can do this.”

“I think you're the unbelievable one.” Jin whispered so it couldn't be heard.

"After letting the egg run into the pot, stir it with chopsticks to make sure the air is mixed evenly as well."

"Why do something like that?"

"If you do it like this, it will come out much better. When it's half done, roll it up as it finishes hardening."

"I didn't think you were this good."

"When my parents were away on excavations, I was always left to watch the house, so that's why. I've even learned a lot about doing chores around the house too."

"Even without a spatula, using just chopsticks you've done really good."

"If you apply the oil properly, there's no problems. Put in another egg, roll it up again, as much as you like you can do it..."

"They look good."

"Here, you give it a shot."

Jin put the omelet he had just finished atop a plate. Cutting the omelet with a utensil she had brought from

her home, Sierra ate the piece in one bite. Even though she wasn't wearing lipstick, there was still a noticeable pretty pinkness to her lips as she opened her mouth, and bit into the omelet with white teeth. With just that, Jin felt a throb in his chest.

“Wow, it's really delicious. It's so light and airy...and the layers make the omelet taste like a Millefeuille and a Baumkuchen cake. And it has just the right texture for chewing.”

“Well, you know. The omelet was the first item I learned to cook, so I've got some confidence.”

Slightly embarrassed from being praised by Sierra, Jin lifted his nose into the air. Sierra carried another bite to her mouth.

“Yep, you're really good at cooking.”

“I guess I'm probably not too bad, if I do say so myself.”

“If it's just the omelet, then the taste is worthy of my personal chef.”

“Th, that so...”

“Really, it was delicious. But, if it had been left on the flame for a little bit longer, it would suit my preferences better.”

“A little longer huh...I got it.”

“Well, next time do your best. I'll be waiting.”

“Thanks.”

“Then, thanks for the meal. You may bow."

“I understand, my master.”

With his head bowed, Jin began cleaning the plates. Stopping suddenly, he turned towards the satisfied looking Sierra, who was busy wiping her mouth with a handkerchief.

“....This isn't right!!!”

“What is it? Is there still desert?”

“That's not it! This is backwards!”

Jin took her arm, forcing her to stand. Sierra knit her eyebrows.

“That hu~rts! Compensate for a girl when you use your strength, commoner!”

“What are you going to do about my satisfaction! You're the one that keeps going 'I want to raise my Genie level!'”

“Ah, ah that's right. I just, started to act like I normally do...”

“You've got this super 'Master' like aura you know. Actually, you're a “Genie”, right? So then, are you really even able to do something for somebody else?”

“Are you suggesting that the word 'impossible' is written in my dictionary?”

“Even if you're burning with pride...”

“I can do it. I can definitely do it!”

Angrily Sierra grabbed hold of the front of Jin's shirt, looking up at him. Sierra's chest pulled in closer to Jin's stomach, until they just touched. Hastily he began

pulling back, but Sierra followed forward with him, and the distance between the two closed. It seemed she didn't realize what she was doing to Jin.

“Wait, why are you trying to run away! Listen when people are talking to you!”

“I'm not really trying to run away though.”

“You know, it's because you're here that's the problem! Because you're here, are you trying to interfere while I work!?”

“That's just another excuse.”

“Well I've got that trait about when people are next to me. If there's nobody there, then I can do it!”

With her hands grasping Jin's chest, she stared at him with her lips drawn back. Her cheeks were colored light red. Her frustrated expression made Jin realize she was having trouble.

From the previous results of the “Egg Roast,” he was very uneasy about leaving her alone. But, looking at Sierra with her lips trembling from frustration, Jin felt it couldn't be helped.

(Right now she's got to be frustrated not just by the Genie Level thing, but also because she's having trouble doing this...She's someone with a lot of pride who cares a lot about failing.)

Jin let out a sigh admitting his defeat.

"...I got it. It's fine if I just leave then."

"Yeah, please do."

With her response to Jin, she puffed herself up and gave the request in an overbearing manner. Jin gave another sigh at her lack of remorse for her attitude.

"So what's the plan then...."

"Give me thirty minutes. You can come back in after thirty minutes. Because I don't want to be in this dirty room for more than that long."

"Okay, okay."

Sighing one last time, Jin left the room.

Even though he left the room, he didn't have any place to go. It was currently dinner time right now, so he didn't

think it would happen but, if someone happened to enter the room and see Sierra, he would be chased out of the dorm with no place to go. Since it was going to be thirty minutes and he had nothing else to do, Jin thought about reading the letter from earlier, but when he tried to get it, he realized he had no pocket on his shirt. He had taken it off earlier.

"Ah...It's still in the pocket."

He was really impatient to start reading the next part. But if he entered the room again at this point, he'd get the third degree from Sierra.

"Well, whatever. It's just thirty minutes...thirty minutes..."

Jin sat down in the corridor, and began waiting restlessly.

During that interval, he heard screams and sounds like 'BANG!', 'SLAM!' and 'CLANG!'. Worried yet helpless to do anything about what was going on in his room, while wanting to storm in, he could only close his eyes and ears to the ruckus.

After a while, the door to the room opened with a creak. Standing there with her apron soiled from the ordeal, was Sierra. Mouth agape, Jin could only stare at Sierra with her hair in disarray, while smiling triumphantly.

“Haha. What do you think? Have a look, Commoner!”

She pointed with a slender white finger to the interior of Jin's room. Cautiously, Jin entered the room.

“An omelet that you made, would be....”

Halting in mid sentence, Jin's eyes bulged as he gazed upon a delicious looking omelet resting atop his desk.

“The shape's right!”

“That's the first thing you say?”

A blood vessel pulsed on Sierra's temple. Impressed, Jin admired the omelet from various angles.

“Well that's...I didn't really believe you could do it.”

“Even I can do it if I give it my all you know.”

Sierra was acting with a little more humility than she normally would. It was most likely due to the great effort she had put in. Giving it her all to make the omelet, that was what Jin thought had made her happy. He also ended up becoming a little happy as well.

"Here, give it a taste!"

Sierra grabbed onto his shoulders, and pushed him down onto a chair. He turned to face the omelet, which he thought would be a waste to eat, as it looked so fantastic.

"A,-Ah...then here I go."

He carried a piece of the omelet that Sierra had already prepared into his mouth. Standing in front of Jin with both hands clasped before her breast, Sierra waited with beating heart and closed eyes. She had looked depressed from earlier, but looking at her serious appearance now, Jin thought that what he had done earlier had really been his mistake.

She's...really not just all talk is she. She's really competitive, but also does things seriously to the best she can.

Putting the layered omelet into his mouth, it unraveled and crumbled with softness as he ate. The fragrance from the egg drifted up and added seasoning as it entered his nose, increasing the overall quality of the omelet by several ten's of times.

“Amazing!” Jin shouted with all his might.

“Really...it's really good?”

Jin's heart beat hard as Sierra asked, holding his arm. She really had small hands. With these small hands and fragile appearance, she had carried a heavy iron pot and portable gas stove all for the sake of letting him eat something...thinking of that, Jin felt even more that what he had done was inexcusable.

In the end the sukiyaki had disappeared, but thinking that she would make him an omelet, and that it would turn out to be done well, no flattery added, he felt really grateful. He was simply expressing how impressed he was to Sierra.

"It's really, really good you know. It's even better than this omelet I had at a Persian Restaurant.

"Haha, Yes!"

Sierra gave a small jump from her happiness. This happiness didn't come from any connection to the Genie of the Lamp's level, but because with her own power she was able to do something, that was what made her happy. Still impressed, Jin continued eating the omelet. Staring at him, Sierra's palms were getting sweaty as she watched over him.

"It's really amazing. I can't even see how the same person who was going to use the whole egg, ended up making this so good."

"F, for now, hurry up and forget about that!"

Sierra had definitely turned completely red.

"I got it. Since you're rich, you always eat good things, that suit your taste. That's why, when you make something you think tastes good, it comes out with the most delicious taste."

With that understanding, Jin finished eating the omelet. That was better than if he had given the best praise.

"Thanks for the meal. Really, it was great. Surprisingly good."

"That's a relief."

Breathing a sigh of relief a smile spread across her face. Jin's heart seemed to skip a beat. Looking at his face, Sierra once again blushed deep scarlet, shaking her head furiously from side to side.

"N, no...that's not it! Are you satisfied? Is your chest overflowing with thankfulness to me?"

As Jin Looked at the one who always speaks from a higher position's appearance after having worked so hard, a smile somehow showed on his face. He stopped his verbal abuse, and nodded his head.

"A~h. Because you let me eat something this good, there is no limit to my thanks."

Even without thinking about being happy, a smile floated to his face. For Sierra, it was the first time seeing his smile. She had thought him to be an ill-tempered, brazen man, but she realized his smiling face was very kind. Becoming embarrassed, she for some reason grew angry, with a purposely over-bearing bad mood.

"Your th-thankfulness can't be just words! Can't you even remember that by now!?"

"I got it. It's 'ChiChinPuiPui' right?"

Jin calmed down, but wasn't returning to his normal self, so instead Sierra grew angrier and even redder.

"I...if you get it, then hurry up and rub my head!"

With her eyes downcast, the upset Sierra held her head out towards Jin.

"Then here goes. ChiChinPuiPui."

Focusing on his thankfulness, Jin rubbed her head. Suddenly, Sierra's whole body became wrapped in light. Looking at the shining Sierra with an appearance like an Angel, Jin sucked in his breath, watching. Sierra was also surprised with herself giving off light, and looked down at her body.

"Amazing! With this, it just might..."

Sierra took the Magic Book from out of her pocket. Opening the very first page, Arabian writing had started to appear. Sierra lept with joy.

"Yay! I've got my first spell!"

"That's good."

"Yeah- it's thanks to you!"

Sierra said with force to Jin who had on a kind expression, causing her to return to herself. Embarrassed and with a scarlet face, Sierra again picked up her attitude.

"N,-No...It's because I went all out, so it's obvious you should be thankful. The satisfaction gauge could have gone up more. Since you're just a commoner, eating such a delicious omelet, there could have been two or three more spells that showed up, don't you think?”

"I guess."

Seeing through Sierra who had become more reserved and embarrassed, Jin couldn't stand any more. It really seemed to him that her actions much more suited a kid.

"So, how do you read...this spell?"

Sierra asked Jin sullenly.

"A Magic Book you can't use, you're hopeless!"

"Well, how am I supposed to know Arabian! It's not J-S-J you know."

"This is read 'Lammul.'"

Jin read the Arabian letters confidently. Impressed, Sierra looked at Jin with eyes as round as saucers.

"How come you can read it?"

"Well, because to search for Solomon's Treasure, I've read a lot of Arabian books."

"You know...you're pretty amazing."

Impressed, Sierra let out a sigh. It seemed she couldn't fully appreciate his skills. By no means was he inferring that Sierra was praising him, he just became a bit shy and his head spun lightly.

"It's not really that...amazing. It's just, from using my dictionary I've slowly been able to remember stuff..."

"Well, I thought the only thing I could do was just ask Papa when I get home. So, what's it mean?"

"That's..."

Preparing to reply, Jin took a deep breath. Sierra was staring intently at him. Her eyes were deep and sparkling just like space, and seemed to be drawing in their surroundings.

It was that which really made Jin realize what it was about Sierra that Yuuya, the other guys, and even Aika

saw. It was the first time he understood that, she had a quality that anybody would find attractive.

Feeling as though he were about to be swallowed up by Sierra, staring at her, Jin was unable to stand. Sierra as well, could feel Jin stiffen. The next thing they both thought of was why they didn't know why this was pleasant, and so they waited a bit, standing upright like a pole.

Just then, Jin noticed the sound of dripping water, and looked around.

“What's that sound?”

Searching around, Jin noticed clothes hung outside his window on hangers. The water was dripping from the clothes, and hitting the window sill.

“Are those my clothes?”

The clothes he had taken off sometime earlier and left on the bed, his shirt, pants and even his underwear... Since it was so much trouble to take care of dirty laundry , he had decided to amass a pile before going to wash them at the dorm's coin laundry place. Little by little he was building up, but...

“W-Where did you wash them?”

“At the sink over there, they were really dirty.”

“You even washed my underwear? By hand?”

Jin's face turned scarlet. At that time, he noticed that among the hanging laundry was also his jacket.

“Huh?”

Jin focused his eyes. Now that it was brought up, he couldn't recall seeing the jacket on the back of the study chair when he had eaten the omelet. Getting worried, Jin turned his gaze back to the chair. It really wasn't there. His blood pressure began to rise.

“You washed it?”

“You can tell by looking.”

“Why did you wash it?”

“It's like I said earlier, they were dirty. It was because of that mountain of books, I wasn't thinking of washing them for you, but I didn't want their dirt contaminating the omelet, so I washed them first.”

But what Sierra had said never entered Jin's ears. In order to confirm it, he went over and picked out the jacket. Reaching his hand into the pocket, he searched around before finding the letter mailed to him by his father. It had been washed as well, so the paper was all ruined. The blue ink had blended with the water, having caused it to disappear completely.

“The letter's...”

At that point, Jin stood with a mix of astonishment and terror.

“Before washing, you didn't check to see if anything was in the pocket?”

“There's no way I'd stick my hand into some Commoner's pocket, is there?”

Sierra said, full of confidence. Despairing, Jin turned his head to the side.

“Checking for pockets before washing, isn't that obvious!? You've totally destroyed what was in there!”

Jin thrust the ruined letter out under Sierra's nose. She froze. It seemed she had just realized what she had done. Her pride was too high though to allow her to apologize.

“It's...it's all your mistake for putting something in your pocket.”

Listening to Sierra with her arms crossed blame him instead, Jin's voltage jumped a level.

“What are you saying! All I did was take off my clothes in my own room, and you went and washed them on your own! You didn't even ask!”

“W-Why do I have to ask permission from a Commoner like you!”

“If you do something wrong, usually you'd apologize! ”

“Why do I have to lower my head to a Commoner like you! A... all I did was get the paper a little wet!”

“This was a letter from my old man. There was a high possibility that there was something written about Solomon's Treasure!”

An interval passed after Jin raised his voice, and in that time Sierra's mouth was open in shock.

Sierra knew that Jin was searching for Solomon's Treasure, and she was looking for it for her own sake as well. But, the fact that Jin was so angry over something like this, was probably because he was lonely after his parents had left him and gone off, and Sierra, who held onto the same feelings in regards to her own parents, could somehow understand how he must be feeling. It seemed he himself wasn't aware of it, but that's exactly why he became so angry over the letter, she could understand that better than anybody.

Because she understood what had happened, she could feel the pain of it. It was obvious Jin would be angry, and her heart beat painfully, but even so she just couldn't bring herself to apologize.

“I...I didn't know.”

The best she could do was just make excuses. Jin couldn't take any more of the unapologetic Sierra, and so he took a deep breath, pushed the hair in front of his eyes away,, and spoke in a low voice.

"I'm sick of being used in your money-making scheme. Just go home."

He had spoken in a distant, cold voice. Up until now this hadn't happened...His distanced appearance also seemed as if it were telling Sierra the same thing. Sierra's scared body trembled, and she squeezed her eyes tight. Just him disregarding her to this extent was enough to wound her fragile heart, is something Jin didn't think about. Until now, there had never been one person to disregard her existence, which was why this hurt so much.

After Jin gave her the order to go back home, Sierra was sucked back into the lamp. At that moment, it seemed as though there were tears in her eyes, but with the blood rushed to his head, Jin couldn't care less.

"It would've been better had I never summoned that selfish girl. I won't summon her again."

Jin threw the Magic Lamp into the trash bin.

Wanting to read the letter from his Father once more, he tried to open it, but it was useless.

"...it really is no use."

Crumpling the letter into a ball, Jin tossed it into the trash as well.

Hanging from the ceiling was a black and red spider, the same one that Jin had chased out through the window the other day. The spiders onyx-black eyes glittered in the light, it had heard everything, having climbed in the window at the time the laundry had been put out.

Chapter 4: The Day of Sierra's Absence

The following day…Sierra was absent from school.

Within the classroom, the seat that was always the center of attention, that was normally radiant like a flower in bloom, was starkly empty. Currently in the middle of English reading class…The girl who stood up from her seat started reading, her voice resonating like an incantation throughout the quiet classroom.

Until just the day before yesterday, he wasn't even aware of Zadou Sierra's existence…And yet, now, the classroom without her presence felt like it was missing its color, seeming as if time had stopped and the world was in grayscale.

Not really listening to the reader, the other students whose eyes were all glued to their textbooks also seemed to be like lifeless dolls. It felt as if, without her there, all the energy had disappeared from the world.

"Jin. Well aren't you looking unusually sharp today."

Hearing Yuuya's voice, Jin reeled in surprise. Class was already over, and the board was already erased by those on duty.

"Ah…so class ended?"

"I feel ya. I can barely keep awake myself in English class."

Yuuya laughed then pinched Jin's collar.

"You dried your clothes by the window last night, right? As I thought, when you wash it by hand, you don't have to use an iron to get it crisp like this. I had no idea that you cared so much about looking good."

"Ah, no. This wasn't my doing…"

"Using the dorm's laundromat, they end up all wrinkled, you know. I'd like to wash mine by hand too, but…If my hands get too rough, I won't be able to play the guitar anymore."

"I see. So handwashing…makes your hands rough, huh."

Jin looked down at his shirt. Although it hadn't been ironed, it had been properly washed, spread out, and

dried. That Sierra, who had until recently had everything done for her, had washed it with her fair hands that had probably never even touched a scrubber before.

I really said something quite mean… he thought to himself. He should have been well aware…that she hadn't done it just for money or to level up as the Genie of the Lamp. After she had smiled so happily when he praised her omelet too...

"Yuuya. Have you ever, hurt someone's feelings by saying something you shouldn't have?"

Jin hung his head as he questioned Yuuya.

"Tons of times, I should think. What about it?"

"Afterwards…were you able to patch things up?"

"Well, they said they'd never forgive me as long as they lived, so I guess not?"

"They must have been really pissed off…"

Jin let his shoulders slump. Replying trivially, Yuuya tilted his head to the side, completely clueless as to why Jin was acting so depressed.

Staying home from school, Sierra was in bed wrapped up in her silk sheets. As of yet, she had not gotten out of bed even once today though the clock read three in the afternoon. About time for afternoon tea, there came a knocking at her door.

"Excuse me, Lady Sierra. I've brought you your tea, may I come in?"

Merely glancing out from within the bundle of sheets, Sierra replied in a thin voice,

"…Fine."

The door opened and Nikolai Pavlov, the butler, walked in. Atop the gold-colored cart he pulled along, there sat a Samovar kettle, which looked like an old-fashioned furnace.

"I am surely being a nuisance, but as my lady has yet to eat anything all morning, I was worried and took the liberty to prepare this. If it is hay fever…Well, I have heard that black tea is effective against hay fever."

"Thank you. However, it is just a cold."

"Black tea works for that as well. It warms the body, and it is even gargled to prevent catching a cold."

Opening the Samovar's tap and pouring out hot water, Nikolai cooled the teapot before preparing a rich black tea. Sitting up in bed, Sierra donned a shawl over her negligee. Though one might call it a negligee, it was magnificently crafted with such an abundance of silk that it was more like a dress.

"I always enjoy drinking Nikolai's Russian tea."

Sierra drank the hot black tea while eating the apple jam prepared by the maids with a spoon. Bathed in the warm steam, her pallid face began to take on a reddish tinge. Nikolai adjusted his monocle while maintaining a poker face.

"Because you have shut yourself up in your room, the master is starting to worry."

"Mm. I don't feel like seeing Papa's face at the moment ."

Sierra was feeling a considerable amount of bitterness against her father. If only she hadn't been born into this lineage as a Genie of the Lamp, then she wouldn't be suffering like this.

It would have been fine even if they didn't have money so long as they could live together happily as a family. But, without money, their family was going to fall apart. At this rate, she couldn't be the Genie of the Lamp. She was going to end up losing it all, the money as well as her family…And just losing Jin was already enough to hurt her this badly.

Sierra clutched her chest tightly with both arms. Since the moment she had woken up, she had felt a stabbing pain in her heart.

"Nikolai. If I were to become completely destitute… You'd surely leave me too, wouldn't you?"

"Hm? Completely…destitute?"

Slightly taken aback by the sudden question, Nikolai stopped to adjust his monocle. Then, without faltering, he responded firmly.

"I would not, my lady. The Pavlov family has been a lineage of servants for generations. Before, we even served the royal Romanov family of Russia. Among the serving families, ours is among the most prestigious. I have been raised from birth to be a quality butler. And now, as I am able to serve such a wonderful master as my lady, I am content. I do not serve for money. I shall work for no other, only for you, my lady Sierra. If by some slim chance, this house should happen to fall, I shall remain and go to any lengths to restore it to its former glory!"

Nikolai proudly puffed out his chest. With a pained look, Sierra shook her head side to side.

"Thank you…Nikolai is quite strong. I cannot accept my fate so readily…"

"Has something happened?"

Looking at Sierra with a worried look on his face, Nikolai asked with some reserve.

"Before, I heard that someone placed an insect in my lady's shoe rack, but…Could something else have happened after that?"

"Ah, no. That, it ended there, so it's fine."

"Then…Araki Jin. Could it be something involving a classmate by that name?"

Hearing Nikolai casually speak that name, Sierra was taken aback, her face turning suddenly red.

"W…where did that come from?!"

"The other day, while taking that young girl named Aika Kasumi to the Sakura dorm…I apologize, but I overheard my lady Sierra speak such a name.

"Ah."

Sierra quickly fell silent, bringing her hand to her mouth. *It seems I was somehow on target,* Nikolai thought, and while maintaining his distance from Sierra, started speaking in a calm voice,

"That girl from the middle school division, I don't know if it was because you felt she was a rare sort or maybe because she was a kind girl who worried about

you so much after the incident with the insect in your shoebox…but my lady was unusually open with her feelings during that conversation."

"W-What do you mean by saying 'unusually'?!"

"Along with my father, I have served in this house from a young age. I know my lady well, about as early as her birth. My lady always goes to such extreme lengths to present herself well, matching other people's expectations without fail and consistently conducting herself with the utmost elegance. However, such a perfect human being does not exist, I should think. So, is it not difficult to act like that?"

Certainly, it was just as Nikolai said, Sierra thought. She and Jin even shared a secret…even though they had started off with an argument, she had been able to speak freely with him. She had certainly gotten angry; however , for Sierra who had never been able to express her anger to anyone else, it was refreshing. For the first time she had been able to openly show her feelings like a normal person. But, now she and Jin were on permanent non-speaking terms.

Unable to watch Sierra curl up seemingly in pain, Nikolai placed a gentle hand upon and kindly caressed her shoulder.

"If you would like, please call upon me anytime for advice. I would like to be my lady's pillar of strength."

"Thank you for the offer, Nikolai, but it's fine. That is, if I were to lay bare all my feelings, I would end up losing my protective shell. Then if I was hurt a second time, I doubt I would be able to stand back up again."

"But the weight of such a shell, surely it would make it impossible to stand back up a second time as well."

"It is much preferable to being hurt."

"I heard my lady say something to that girl named Aika. That, in your class, there is someone ignoring you …That there is a boy who simply reads books all the time without acknowledging your existence. And that, as you have never encountered such a boy before, it was weighing on your mind. About that, is there a problem?"

"W-Well, that's...just,"

Momentarily taken aback, Sierra hung her head. Really , she would have never considered the possibility that Aika would be Jin's childhood friend. Fortunately, it seemed like Aika wasn't treating what Sierra had said with too much significance and hadn't told Jin about any of it, so at least that was a relief.

"I think I understand your concern. Like a rose, even if my lady does not speak up, she attracts considerable attention. But for someone to not take notice, they must be quite the odd one. Could he possibly hate me, or maybe there is something about me he hates even though I have never done anything to him… Such behavior as his would surely make a girl worry and ask herself such questions, but someone as splendid as my lady does not have any characteristics that would warrant others' spite. So please, do not mind it too much."

With all his might, Nikolai continued on.

"To be interested in mere archaeology books rather than my lady Sierra, this boy's ideal girl is probably something outrageous like a mummy or some such. Since he has such a skewed sense of aesthetics as that, there really is no helping it."

Nikolai was trying so hard to encourage her. It was precisely because he was always like this, worrying about her so much, that Sierra couldn't confide in him. She didn't mind if it was someone like Aika who would basically shrug it off afterwards…But she didn't want to needlessly trouble Nikolai, who would seriously worry himself for her sake.

"I guess so…"

Pretending to accept his take, Sierra forced a smile.

"Thank you, the tea was delicious."

Acting like she was fine, she returned the cup. Nikolai understood this to mean "please leave already." However , as he was still worried about her, he asked just to make sure.

"Would you like seconds?"

"No, thank you."

For Nikolai, her empty smile and words were full of loneliness. Because, he understood that Sierra would continue on in her confusion by herself without confiding in anyone else.

"Well then, excuse me. If you need anything else, please call for me right away."

Reluctantly, Nikolai bowed and moved the cart out of the room. Right outside, he found Mary, the head maid, waiting. She had her arms crossed and looked a bit angry .

"Mister Pavlov. The servants have been looking for you, since they cannot proceed without your command."

"Ahh…my apologies, Miss Savant. Thank you."

He gave a small bow of his head, then just as he was passing by Mary's side, she murmured.

"Conversing with the mistress is a job for the maids.

"I apologize…As the mistress's driver, it was simply accidental. I was by no means trying to intrude on your territory, Miss Savant."

"Let me give you a piece of advice…Of course, I am sure that, with your pedigree as part of a serving lineage that even served the Romanov royal family, you must have heard what I am about to say before."

Mary was looking at Nikolai with a sharp glint in her eyes.

"We are merely serving staff. A master and a servant are of decidedly different levels, a difference that cannot be overcome. A romantic relationship with a master is forbidden…That is an absolute law for butlers and maids ."

"I-I know that!"

Nikolai's pale face reddened with anger. While Nikolai was frazzled, Mary turned an even colder glare upon him.

"Oh my. So even Mister Pavlov gets angry, I see. Showing emotion so openly is unbecoming of a servant. Handed down through the generations from my ancestors who served the royal families of England, that is a personal family tenet."

"N-No, it's not like I was actually angry."

Nikolai hastily tried to put on a blank expression, but as flustered as he was, it was simply impossible.

Thinking that at this rate, he'd be further criticized, Nikolai hastily made his escape. Watching him go, Mary released her ice-like expression and let out a mild laugh.

"Such an easy boy to tease. I'll make him realize that Russian servants are no match for England, the motherland of maids. That, even as servants, we are still of different status…Taste the pride of the British Empire! "

Mary did an about face on her heel. Elegantly and magnificently, her apron dress fluttered as she turned. Then, facing the battlegrounds where her next job awaited her, she walked heroically forward.

At the same time, after drinking the black tea, Sierra was feeling warm and sleepy.

As she was on the verge of sleep within the embrace of her bed, her cell phone that she had left atop the bedside table began ringing. Checking the caller ID, she didn't recognize the number.

"Probably a solicitor?"

Sierra covered her head with her sheets and attempted to ignore the call. However, the phone simply would not stop ringing. Finally, unable to stand it any longer, Sierra reluctantly picked up the phone. Immediately, there came a quiet male voice.

"You were absent today, weren't you, Genie of the Lamp."

Sierra's face went stiff. The only ones who should have known that she was the Genie of the Lamp were her father and Jin, no one else.

"You…Who is this?"

Holding the cell phone in both hands and sitting upright in bed, Sierra asked while trembling. From the other end, there came only a laugh.

"Right now, your lamp is in my hands…If told you that, what would you do?"

"Eh? W-Why do you have it?"

"I could make you my servant right now if I rub this lamp. Oh, I know…Wouldn't it be funny if I called you

out in the middle of the school, to let as many people find out as possible."

"D…Don't joke like that! That sort of disgraceful… Rather than that, anyone would refuse becoming the servant of some stranger!"

"I thought you'd say something like that. Besides, it wouldn't be good to change ownership of the lamp midway anyway…Since your level will return to zero and all the spells from the spellbook would disappear, after all."

"How do you know about that?"

"If I summoned you, you'd understand…you'd even find out who I am."

Clink, she heard a metallic sound. Thinking it might be the sound of the lamp, Sierra desperately gripped her cell phone tightly.

"W-Wait! If it's money, I'll give you however much you want, so please don't rub the lamp, just give it back!"

"Are you that opposed to becoming my servant? What 's so good about that Araki Jin?"

"A…About Araki Jin?"

Sierra's face turned bright red, blushing as if on fire.

"It's not like I actually want to be his servant or anything! I, it's just that I don't want to go back to level zero after finally leveling up, so…Never mind that, just give back the lamp!"

"Well then, you should come to the school at midnight tonight."

"I can't leave my house that late. Mary is very strict, plus my driver Nikolai would be asleep then."

"When midnight comes, I'll rub the lamp. Then, you'll be my servant…permanently. Until I rub your head, you won't be able to return. I'll never let you leave my side."

"W-What are you thinking?! That's horrible!"

"Well, make sure to come to the school then."

"Why are you doing this to me?! Do you have a grudge or something?"

"A grudge…well, I guess you could say that. You could also say I hate because I love. My love letter, you threw it away without even reading it, didn't you?"

"Love letter? I didn't receive anything like that, are you sure you didn't get the wrong person?"

"…I'll be waiting for you at the school."

"Wait a moment, just deciding all on your own…!"

Sierra shouted, but he had already hung up. Dumbfounded, Sierra just stared at her cell phone. The lamp had passed from Jin's hands into those of a stranger …She just couldn't believe that had happened. Maybe it was a lie. But in that case, he knew too many things that no one else should know.

She was scared to check for sure. But, she had to check. While struggling to calm her racing heart, Sierra got out of bed and rang the golden bell that lay atop her bedside table. Right away, Mary and another one of the maids arrived.

"You called, my lady?"

"I'm going out."

"Understood."

Mary respectfully nodded. While she brushed Sierra's hair, the other maid pulled out a change of clothes from the closet and started getting Sierra changed.

Standing still like a dress-up doll, Sierra thought about Jin. Even though she had told him that she didn't want anyone else to see her dressed in a maid outfit, for him to have given up the lamp, she just didn't want to believe that he could have done such a thing. Rather than anger, she felt an overwhelming sadness.

As she allowed the maids to dress her, Sierra sighed bitterly.

Long fingers closed the cell phone with a click.

They belonged to the one who called Sierra…That is, to Konoe Ukyou. Dressed in his uniform and seated

comfortably in the student council room, Ukyou wore a devilish smile upon his carefully readied face. Upon the president's desk in front of him was the magic lamp.

"President, are you here?!"

Hastily knocking as she passed, Eriko Himuro the vice president rushed into the room.

Eriko, a second-year, was relatively tall and was stylish like a model. Her expression tended to be rather cold, and perhaps because of that, her sharply designed glasses suited her quite well. Along with her semi-long hair, she really gave off a mature impression. With a blank face, Ukyou asked Eriko.

"What's the matter? It's not like you to make a ruckus."

"It's a serious problem, so I felt I needed to inform you directly."

Placing her hands on Ukyou's desk, Eriko leaned forward and with an almost vicious air, vehemently expressed her concern.

"The boys from room 204 of the Tachibana dorm brought the freshman Zadou Sierra into their room! It's a clear violation of the dormitory rules!"

"Hmph…Impossible."

Ukyou practically snorted. Eriko hit the desk roughly with both hands.

"It's true, President! Sierra often calls the pizza place where I work part-time to order things off the special menu, and…last night, she wanted to place an order to the centermost room on the Tachibana dorm's second floor!"

"The ones in that room are her classmates, Araki Jin and Utada Yuuya. Yesterday, as punishment for breaking regulations, Araki was deprived of dinner, so feeling sympathetic, Zadou must have been trying to send him something, don't you think?"

"No, it didn't seem like that at all!"

"If, as you say, she was in their room, then do you really think they would have ordered food or anything like that? All the dorm residents know that girls and ordering out are prohibited, after all."

"You…no, all the students of our school even, they have been completely taken in by Zadou Sierra! Even now, I'm a little hesitant to say it since it might sound like mere slander, but…I know for a fact how cunning she is. That girl is nothing like the perfect girl everyone seems to think of her as. She's just pretending!"

Eriko was standing with her fists in the air as she stressed her point, but Ukyou disregarded her without interest.

"It's an impossible story."

"I don't think it's good for someone with authority to involve personal feelings into their decisions."

As Eriko watched him with a concentrated look in her eyes, Ukyou asked with a hint of suspicion.

"Personal feelings?"

"To the president who would always say 'boys and girls should be kept separated after age seven' and kept his own distance from all the girls, only Zadou Sierra became an exception…You gave a love letter to her, didn't you?"

"W-What nonsense are you spouting?!"

Eriko pressed the bewildered Ukyou even further.

"I found it while I was cleaning the president's room."

"And so you just went and read it?"

"…As the vice president, I want to know everything there is to know about the president."

"Hmph…And here I thought that at least you were different from all those other foolish girls."

"Y-You've got it all wrong! This isn't jealousy or anything like that…!"

"Get out. Please, if you would, so you don't disappoint me any further."

Ukyou coldly pointed to outside his room. Eriko gulped without trying to argue, but quietly, she murmured.

"…In that case, I'll just have to get proof and make it clear to him. I'll remove Zadou Sierra's mask and completely erase the president's attachment to her…"

Eriko ran out of the president's room. However, she ran into a boy who was walking down the hallway and fell.

"Ah, ow~!"

"Oh, sister! Are you alright?"

The one she had run into was a large-eyed, large-haired, and all around large looking version of her younger brother, Keita. The near-sighted Eriko had dropped her glasses and couldn't see anything properly.

"M-My glasses, my glasses…"

"They're right here, sister."

Keita picked them up and placed them onto Eriko's face. Sitting on the ground with eyes like a puppy's, he was looking worriedly into Eriko's face.

"Sorry, I was in a hurry…"

"It's fine. How about Keita, you weren't hurt, right?"

Calmly readjusting her glasses, Eriko asked as a big sister in a genuinely kind voice.

"Yeah, I'm totally fine…"

"That's good, as long as nothing happened to my precious Keita. If anything does happen, I'll…"

Eriko hugged Keita tightly. The small Keita fit snugly into the taller Eriko's arms. Keita was completely embarrassed and a little unsettled.

"U-Umm, sister? Could it be that your pay from your part-time job has been reduced?"

"Eh? Whatever do you mean?"

"Sister, even though you're here on scholarship and commute from our house, which is far away…To let me concentrate on my studies, you work late into the night and put me up in the dorms, right?"

"That's only a matter of course. Keita is a boy after all, so I want you to study whatever you want and follow your dreams. As your sister, I'll work to that end as much as it takes."

"But you study after that late into the night too, which is why your eyes have even gone bad…"

Keita clutched his pained heart.

"But, I'll try my best to become an exemplary dorm resident, so maybe the dorm head will recommend me for the living fees exemption. I actually came here to talk to the dorm head about that."

"Hmm, exemplary resident? Amazing, as expected of the brother I'm so proud of!"

As Eriko hugged him one more time, she took to wiping dust from his uniform and brushing his hair, pulling at the edges of his clothing to straighten them out , and generally making sure he looked his best.

"There we go. Well, take care. And make sure you don't do anything rude in front of the president."

"Yeah, thank you."

Kouta gave a meek nod before going into the president's room. Ukyou turned to look at him.

"I've been waiting, Himuro. I have your recommendation letter written here."

"T-Thank you very much, dorm head!"

Kouta gladly took the envelope from Ukyou's hands. Taking a glance at the magic lamp sitting on his desk, Kouta asked Ukyou.

"Um, dorm head. About that lamp…I took it from Araki-sempai's room like you ordered, but…is it really okay?"

"Of course. Bringing personal items is prohibited after all."

"But, even if it was the dorm head's orders…To just sneak into his room without permission while he was

away, don't you think there's something wrong with that ?"

"In a dorm, the dorm head's orders and rulings are absolute. There is no room for those who question it. An exemplary resident should accept that completely, Himuro."

Ukyou placed a hand on Kouta's shoulder. Then, he whispered quietly.

"You know, your sister seems to have some unusual dislike for Zadou Sierra and is useless to me…But, it seems like I may have some use for you."

"Huh?"

"Himuro, what do you think of Zadou Sierra?"

"A-About Sierra-san?"

Kouta started blushing furiously. It seemed that, unlike his sister Eriko, he admired Sierra as much as any of the other students.

"W-Well…I think she's extremely pretty. I've never seen anyone as beautiful as her…Ah, of course, with the exception of my sister, that is."

"Would you like to confess to her?"

"Of course not! She's on another level, just like everyone says. Sierra is like a celebrity, so it's enough to just admire her from afar. For someone to even try to monopolize her, it just wouldn't be allowed."

"So you're saying that the probability of being rejected if you confess is too high…so you wouldn't want to risk it."

"Eh…No, that's not what I…"

"I get it completely, you're worried that your pride will suffer as you'll be the only one rejected."

"W, what are you saying?"

"Love is not something to be reasoned with…You should take what you want without hesitation."

In that moment, Ukyou's body shined bluish white. Along with that radiance that was hard to look at, there came a shrill noise…The high pitched noise resonated in Keita's head. Before he knew it, he was on his knees, holding his head.

"It's splitting! My head is going to split open!"

"I see. Separate the heart from reason. By liberating the subconscious self behind the consciousness, a human being can reach a potential several-fold greater than usual."

As an unbearable pain filled Kouta's head, he continued to wail loudly. But then, all of a sudden, he fell silent. As he lay crumpled on the floor, the light had gone out of Kouta's eyes.

"…Sierra-san…"

With nary a thought in his head, Kouta whispered her name. Ukyou grinned.

"I hope you come, Zadou Sierra. And I hope you bring that man with you…"

Like a phantom, Kouta rose to his feet. While still shining bluish white, Ukyou gave a low laugh.

Around the same time, Jin had stopped by Alf Layla again on his way home from school.

He hadn't been able to find Yuuya, who usually walked home with him, so he thought maybe Yuuya was here though it turned out not to be the case.

"Hey, sorry for the wait!"

Good-naturedly as ever, Alf brought him a large plate of Persian curry. Fluffy white rice topped the manhole-sized plate, along with a great deal of sweet-and-spicy curry that included pomegranates. There was even a heap of green salad.

"Ah, wait. I'm just here looking for Yuuya…Also, I'm broke right now."

"That's why I brought you this, since it's free as long as you finish it in ten minutes. Our Persian curry is the best on earth, so eat it with gusto!"

Full of cheer, Alf slapped Jin on the back.

"So, eat a lot, then once you're plump..."

"Plump?"

"Ah, no, nothing."

Alf covered her mouth. From in between her fingers, drool was seeping out her mouth. Jin scowled.

"…Hey you. You couldn't possibly be planning to eat me, could you?"

"No way, no way!"

A bit too hastily, Alf repeated back like a parrot. Actually, now that he looked, he noticed the shop owner and mistress looking his way for some reason, suspiciously enough.

"I'm going home."

Feeling uncomfortable, Jin stood up.

"Ah, wait!"

Alf desperately grabbed onto Jin's collar and clung to him from behind. Jin, unable to support her weight, fell on his face, surprising all the nearby customers who were eating. He wondered if Alf might be the type who looked thinner in her clothes than she actually was, because as he lay pinned beneath her, he could feel her chest pushing amply against his back. However, as his face was pressing painfully against the floor, now really wasn't the time for such idle thoughts.

"What are you doing, that hurts!"

"Now now, don't hurry yourself, just take your time being eat…I mean, let us eat…I mean, eating, okay?"

"Do you want to eat me so much that you messed up twice?! Or rather, why would you eat humans?!"

"No, it's not that we eat humans."

Alf was trying to completely contain the struggling Jin beneath her, but then when she felt the hard lump on the left side of his collarbone, she stopped moving.

"This is…!"

The instant Alf paused, Jin desperately escaped from beneath her.

"Ah, wait a second! I can do something about your shoulder!"

"It's just a swollen lymph node, well see ya!"

Jin shook Alf off of him. Just as he was about to escape the shop, the shop door opened and Sierra rushed in.

Jin was surprised breathless. Besides the fact that they had fought the last time they met, it was also the first time he had seen her wearing plain clothes. Made extravagantly with top-grade chiffon georgette, covered in frills and flowers, a pale pink…it looked just like the kind of clothes a flower faerie might wear.

"Sierra-sama!"

"It's Zadou! And in her own clothes!"

The students nearby were making a ruckus. They had all been enraptured by her and left gaping. Crouching

down in front of the collapsed Jin, Sierra held her anxiously pained heart as she asked.

"…You, did you hand over the lamp to anyone?"

"Eh? The lamp?"

Bewildered, Jin just stared at her blankly. Then, Alf poked her head in from the side.

"What's this about a lamp?"

"Ah, nothing, please excuse us a moment."

Taking Sierra by the shoulder, Jin quickly made his way out of the shop.

"I said to wait, didn't I! Geez already…What about the curry?!"

Alf shouted at Jin's back.

Outside the shop, Jin kept a firm grip on Sierra's arm and led her to a narrow alleyway between a couple of buildings so that they would be out of the public eye. Making a sullen face, Sierra shook off his arm.

"That hurt! Don't touch me so familiarly, commoner!"

"What were you thinking, with all those people there! Weren't you the one who said to keep the magic lamp thing a secret?!"

"You're the one who leaked the secret, weren't you? You even gave the lamp to someone!"

"It seems like daydreaming must be your specialty, huh."

"I must have been annoying you, so you just pawned me off on someone, didn't you?!"

"Well you certainly have been a bother! But, you did say that you'd be embarrassed if anyone else saw you wearing a maid outfit, so I've kept it a secret that you're a Genie of the Lamp and I haven't given the lamp to anyone either!"

"But, I just got a call from someone saying that they have the lamp!"

"If you don't believe me, come with me to the dorm. I' ll show you the lamp!"

"Fine, I want to see it!"

Responding in kind with vehemence, Sierra shouted back.

In front of Tachibana Dormitory, Sierra waited. All the dorm residents were peering out their windows, generally making a fuss.

"Hey, why is Zadou in front of the dorm?"

"Oh man~! She's cute out of uniform as well~!"

"What's the meaning of her coming here with Araki Jin? The nerve of that freshman!"

Amongst the dorm residents, rumors and speculation spread along with admiration and jealousy.

Jin was in his own room, looking for the lamp in the trashcan where he had tossed it. However, as hard as he

looked, the magic lamp simply was not there. All the rest of the trash was still there, so it's not like it had been taken during trash collection. He wondered if he might have left it somewhere else on accident…So, he looked all around his room, even in his bed, but it wasn't to be found anywhere.

Now pale, Jin walked out of the dorm. After waiting impatiently, Sierra rushed to meet him as he came out.

"Hey, that freshman is talking with Zadou!"

"And I haven't even talked to her once yet!"

The stares of the other residents pierced Jin's backside. Jin, after moving somewhere out of view from all those guys, took a breath and confessed to Sierra.

"Sorry. I've lost the lamp."

"What do you mean you lost it?!"

Sierra was shocked, and gripping Jin's hands, she started shouting hysterically.

"How could that have happened?! It's such a small sparse room, just how do you lose something like that?!"

"I have no idea! I threw it into the trashcan. Because I didn't think I'd be calling you ever again!"

"What did you say?! Just because of one teensy-weensy mistake, you were planning on never calling me out again? Moreover, to throw such an important lamp into the trash, you're such a narrow-minded commoner!"

"You know, you really don't seem to have reflected on your mistake at all…"

"Couldn't it have been thrown out with the trash?"

"No, the rest of the trash is still in the trashcan. So in other words, the lamp must have been taken by the guy who called you, right? There must be a thief living in the dorm, how troublesome."

"Forget about that, I'm the one who's troubled! That messed up guy called me and…"

"Should a lady be using the term 'messed up'?"

"This isn't the time to be criticizing my choice of words! That messed up guy said he was going to summon me and then he's never going to rub my head."

"Well then, can't you just become an independent Genie of the Lamp?"

"I'm filling the satisfaction gauge so that I can go home , don't you see? If my head isn't rubbed, then the satisfaction gauge won't fill up and I won't be able to go home ever. I'll be trapped in a room!"

"Isn't that called…confinement?"

Jin finally grasped the gravity of the situation.

"Also, if he calls me out in public…Then everyone will find out that I'm a Genie of the Lamp. They'll see me in that embarrassing maid outfit! If I have to suffer such humiliation, I'll bite my tongue and kill myself!"

"Maybe that's a good idea as a last resort, but can't you think of another way out of this?"

"Like buying a doomsday weapon or something?"

"Umm, I was thinking more along the lines of taking back the lamp."

Jin replied calmly to the overly extreme Sierra.

"He said that he'd give back the lamp if I come to the school at midnight."

"That sounds too much like a trap."

"And I have a curfew, so walking around at night is…"

"Yeah. And I bet you're scared you'll run into perverts and the like."

"As if! I won't be scared if ghosts appear!"

Sierra shouted, her face pale. She really seemed serious . Gripping her hands tightly into fists, she insisted vehemently. His eyes turning into points, Jin couldn't help but start laughing.

"…Ghosts? You actually believe in them? You're surprisingly childish, huh."

"There's a Genie of the Lamp standing right in front of you, and yet how is that you can't accept the possibility of ghosts!"

Being laughed at, Sierra puffed up like a transparent meat bun in her anger.

"Besides, if I go meet with that creepy unknown man by myself, then who knows what he'll do to me. To begin with, if a certain *someone* hadn't lost the lamp, then I wouldn't even be thinking about any of this stuff…"

Sierra glanced at Jin with a hint of accusation in her eyes. Jin put on a steadfast expression and, for a while at least, ignored her, but as she continued to stare at him, he eventually couldn't play innocent any longer, and his shoulders slumped.

"…I understand. It's my fault since I lost the lamp…I'll go with you."

Hearing him say that, Sierra relaxed. However, instead of showing gratitude, crossing her arms and upturning her face,

"That's right. It's all your fault, so take responsibility like a man."

She replied haughtily. Seeing how troublesome this was likely to become, Jin sighed deeply.

Chapter 5 Majnun of Lunacy

Against the dark night sky, the pale full moon shone clearly.

It was eleven o'clock…still one hour before the designated time. In the dead of night, the school grounds were gravely silent. With all the lights out, it was absolutely dark.

"How strange."

It was the first thing out of Jin's mouth as he whispered, looking at the school.

Sierra had gone home once, then some time later, returned again. If something should happen, the fluttery dress would have been a problem, so she had changed into leggings that were easier to move around in. Jin was also wearing street clothes. For fear of ghosts, Sierra was clinging to Jin's back.

He was a bit troubled as he could feel her slender body against his back, but if he were to point it out, he could just see her saying, "How can you think about such

things now?! You lech! Pervert! Commoner!" Actually, he felt like he could practically hear her voice. However, he kept silently telling himself to ignore it.

Still clinging to him, Sierra asked.

"What's strange?"

"Even if it's the middle of the night, there should at least be guards patrolling the halls. And you should be able to see the beams from their flashlights through the windows, but…"

When he placed a hand against the bars of the school gate, it opened easily. Surprised, Jin retracted his hand.

"It's open."

"Because someone's expecting us?"

With a gulp, Sierra swallowed. While remaining wary, Jin entered through the school gates. Sierra held onto his hand and timidly followed along behind him. As expected, it made it hard for him to walk, and Jin told her as much.

"Hey, don't cling to my arm."

"I-I'm not clinging!"

"Well then, you're curling your fingers and holding on tight, right? I can't walk like this, so let go."

Jin tried to shake Sierra loose from his arm, but refusing to let him, she gripped his arm like a koala. Sierra's slender yet soft body was pressing against Jin's stiff arm. It was making his heart race.

"Sorry, but all I'm doing is holding onto you!"

"Ah, geez, it's really hard to move!"

As the two argued back and forth, the gate closed with a bang behind them. Startled, they turned around; however, they found no one there. They tried pushing the gate open, but it wouldn't budge.

"…I figured something like this might happen, but it seems like we've been trapped."

They heard a deep laugh coming from somewhere. Frightened, Sierra clung even closer to Jin. With the clearly shining moon at his back…Atop the school roof, a

human figure could be seen. Long hair fluttering in the wind, the long slender figure was standing motionless. It was Konoe Ukyou. Jin squinted his eyes in disbelief.

"The dorm head…What is he doing?"

Actually, he hadn't been present during dinner. The staff residents, Yuuya, and a number of others hadn't returned even though it was past curfew, Jin remembered. Uykou was still dressed in his uniform.

"Just as I surmised. Always leaving things to the servants, you're a girl who can't do anything alone…I just knew you wouldn't come alone."

As he spoke clearly from afar, he took the magic lamp and held it up high.

"Ah, the lamp! Then, you're the one who called me earlier!"

From behind Jin's back, Sierra pointed at Ukyou atop the roof.

"You, I've forgotten your name…but, I'm sure you're the student president, I think! Are you saying it's okay for the student president to go around stealing things?!"

"Dorm head, what's the meaning of this?!"

Jin also spoke fervently. Ukyou just smiled coolly.

"By midnight, come up here. If you can make it, I'll return the lamp, but if you don't…"

"You'll make me your slave, you mean, right?"

Sierra scowled up at Ukyou with a determined look in her eyes.

"No way! Just you wait, we're going to drag you to the edge and drop you off the side of the roof!"

"You're suddenly energetic, huh. Are you over your fear of ghosts as well?"

While hiding behind his back, Sierra declared in response to Jin's interjection,

"Of course you're the one going, commoner."

"I'm seriously shocked by this surprising turn of events. You still plan on making other people do things for you?"

"Naturally. Right now, I haven't been called out from the lamp, so it's not like I'm your servant or anything. Actually, I'm the kind to give orders, you're the type to follow them."

"You know, I get the feeling you sidestepped the question rather cleverly just now."

"Whatever, just go!"

"You dare to ignore me? Looks like you two've got some guts."

Ukyou suddenly snapped his fingers. Just then, a mob of more than a hundred students shuffled out onto the school grounds. High schoolers and middle schoolers were present, boys and girls alike, although most of them were boys from the high school division. Taken aback, Jin and Sierra looked at the mass of people nervously.

"W-What's with them?"

The guys from the football club, wearing their armor-like protective gear, were standing like a wall in front of them. The eyes staring out from within the helmets were completely unfocused.

"Si…Sierra…Zadou…So cute…So…cute…"

Shuffling like zombies, they had their arms out in front of them and were heading towards Sierra. Sierra was creeped out and clung tight to Jin's back. Regardless of how selfish Sierra was, as a man, there was only one acceptable course of action he could take. A bit reluctantly, Jin spread out his arms and stood to meet them. As Sierra watched him, she started to blush.

"Ghrahh~!"

Suddenly, those giants roared like wild-beasts and tackled Jin. Hit by those nearly two meter tall brutes, the relatively average Jin was blown away.

"Wahh~!"

"Kyaah~! Commoner!"

Crying out as she watched Jin get tossed aside, Sierra tried to rush to his side. However, the guys came from behind and caught Sierra by the arm then started fighting over her. Sierra angrily fought back, but her opponents were too much. With her slender feminine arms, no matter how much she might struggle, she simply couldn't break free.

"What is wrong with you all?! Let me go, you insolent wretches!"

"Zadou...Cute. Zadou...Love!"

The guys swarmed all over her.

"Kyaahh~!"

Sierra's cry was swallowed up as they piled on top of her. It looked as if they were in the middle of a scrum. Holding his head in pain after that terrible blow, Jin picked himself up and desperately rushed over.

"Hey, what do you think you're doing?! Get away from Zadou!"

He could hear Sierra pitiful cry from beneath all the bodies. In order to save her, Jin pushed and pulled as hard as he could to remove the giants. However, the averagely built Jin stood no chance against such large guys. The moon at his back, Ukyou laughed.

"It's futile. Those guys don't have a shred of sanity left. "

"What do you mean?"

"They've been driven mad by the moon. Their restraints have been lifted, and their true desires manifest . Discretion, sympathy, kindness, all that has vanished... Now, only such human instincts as jealousy and hatred drive them. Those boys longed for that girl, but tied down by the fetters of reason, they never allowed themselves to act upon their feelings. I have cut them free from their chains."

In addition to the moon, Ukyou's body itself gave off a bluish white light. Jin scowled.

"Did you use hypnotism on them or something?"

"It's the light of the moon...I already told you that, didn't I?"

"I didn't understand a single word out of your mouth!"

Jin took hold of a tonbo meant for preparing soil that had been left in a corner of the grounds and started whacking the pile of guys on their backs, but it had absolutely no effect on them.

"Like I said, it's futile. Those guys are madly in love with Sierra Zadou. Their stifled hearts have been set free. ..They won't be stopped by something so minor."

"Why would you want to do this to Zadou? You like Zadou too, right? So are you just going to let those guys have her?"

"Like…you say? Hmph, I may certainly seem the same as those other guys, but…Hmph."

Ukyou laughed derisively. Unable to understand what he was saying, Jin was confused. Sierra's cries were growing fainter. What was happening to her under there. ..Jin couldn't help but worry, sticking the handle of the tonbo into a gap between the giants' backs and attempting to pry them off. However, before he'd even made an inch of headway, the handle broke. He couldn't even hear Sierra's cry anymore. The blood drained from his face. Things were looking beyond bad...

Just then, there came a sharp yell.

"Close your eyes! Here I go~~!"

Before he could determine what it was, Jin was compelled by the power of the voice and closed his eyes instinctively.

"Bsh~~!"

There was a violent spraying noise.

"Gwahh~!"

Shrieking howlishly, the beasts who had been covering Sierra rolled about clutching their faces. Sierra emerged from within the pile. Curled up on the ground, she was hacking and coughing. Jin quickly took her into his arms.

"Are you alright, Zadou?! Did they do anything to you ?!"

"...Reeks..."

"Eh?"

"It reeks of sweat! When was the last time they even washed those uniforms?! I thought I was going to suffocate!"

"...That's all you're complaining about, the smell?"

Jin was dumbfounded but relieved. It seemed that with all the members fighting for the right to go first, it became a real scrum with each member pushing and shoving the other, and so not a single one of them had been able to secure the prized Sierra for himself. Full of anger, Sierra shouted at Jin.

"Saying "that's all", what's with that attitude! You should hurry up and save me sooner."

"Acting like that after being rescued, you must be quite the cheeky one, huh."

The one saying that as she approached was none other than Alf. Carrying fire extinguishers under her arm, with even more of them slung behind her back, she even had some smaller ones holstered to her belt. Full of surprise, Sierra stared at her with huge eyes.

"Y-You're...that girl from the curry shop!"

"Nowadays, you don't call it that! It's a Persian restaurant, not a curry shop!"

Alf snapped sharply at Sierra. With extinguisher chemicals in their eyes, the big guys were on the ground, writhing about in horrendous pain. Alf pointed at the school and vigorously declared,

"Come on, we're going! We're taking back that lamp!"

"Yeah! Good luck, commoner!"

As if she weren't involved, Sierra ordered like always, pushing Jin roughly from behind. Unsteady on his feet, Jin felt as if he might fall. Alf grabbed Sierra firmly by the arm.

"You're coming too. You have to help your Master, you know!"

"Wha-? I-It's not like this commoner is my Master or anything!"

Sierra retorted on reflex. With a hint of suspicion, Jin asked Alf,

"How do you know about that? It couldn't be that you're also..."

"Don't be ridiculous. If I was your enemy, do you really think I would have gone to all this trouble to save you?"

Alf smacked him on the head. It seemed that even when she wasn't delivering orders, her manual dexterity was as quick as ever. On top of the roof, Ukyou's face scrunched up spitefully.

"Guh...that girl is...!"

Soon, even more students started shuffling out from the school building. Amongst them was Himuro Keita.

"That guy, he's the first year who didn't give me a riceball before. So does that mean all the guys who didn't come back were over here...Then, maybe Yuuya is here as well?"

Similar to those giants from earlier, every one of these students also had Sierra in their sights.

"Ooh...Za-Zadou...Super cute..."

"These guys too, huh! What's going on here?!"

"It's the Daemon of Adultery, Majnun."

Licking her lips, Alf pulled out a fresh extinguisher. Adultery, put in relatively hard-and-fast terms, meant a man and a woman amorally forming an illicit relationship. Sierra shivered and asked for clarification.

"What...what is a 'Daemon of Adultery'?"

"Actually, I was sure that Jin was Majnun at first because of the way he smelled, so I kind of followed him. Things are different if he's a 'key' though."

"What do you mean by 'key'?"

"The 'key' to sealing and releasing the Genie of the Lamp."

Just then, the students rushed them, so cutting the conversation short, Alf once again fired the extinguisher.

"Save the questions for later, let's go get back the lamp now!"

Alf led the way, taking the other two into the building. Looking down upon them from the rooftop, Ukyou slowly drew the sword in his hand from its scabbard. He was starting to pale.

"The Shamshir girl couldn't possibly be thinking of forming a union...Well, I still have minions left within the school. And even in the one in a million case that they somehow make it up here, *this* man should not lose. Even if *that* man gets his hands on the Shamshir...he still lacks the necessary power."

The silver blade glinted coldly in the moonlight.

Jin and the others headed up towards the rooftop. The school interior was swarming with students as well, and more continued to come down the stairs one after another. The three continued to take them down one at a time with the fire extinguishers.

"I don't get any of this!"

Panting because the extinguisher was heavy, Sierra took the time to shout in annoyance.

"What the heck happened to all these guys? And you, just who in the world are you?"

"Just as you've been born into the family of Genies of the Lamp, I'm part of the family of Genies of the Shamshir."

"Shamshir?"

Suddenly, Yuuya climbed over the stair railing and jumped down, grabbing onto Alf's back.

"Wah!"

Alf kept upright by quickly clutched onto the railing, but because Yuuya had clung to her, her sling holster had broken and a fire extinguisher fell down the stairs.

"Yuuya! I knew it, you're being controlled too!"

"Zadou...Cute...Want kiss...!"

Yuuya leapt at Sierra and knocked her down. Embracing Sierra's slender body against her will, he

brought his lips closer and closer. Flailing away at Yuuya's head, Sierra tried to escape as if her life depended on it.

"Stop it, you insolent wretch!"

"Zadou...Fluffy...Soft...So nice~..."

Yuuya was rubbing his face into Sierra's chest. Blushing furiously, she tried to force Yuuya away, grabbing his head with both hands and pushing with all her might. However, as frail as she was, she was no match for him.

"Noo~, pervert! Someone save me!"

"Yuuya, come to your senses!"

Taking a hold of Yuuya's shoulder, Jin pulled him off of Sierra. Compared to the army of giants from earlier, Yuuya who had probably never lifted anything heavier than a guitar was almost too easy an opponent. When Jin, who was used to mountain climbing and digging with a shovel when excavating ruins and the like, exerted his full strength; Yuuya was sent flying and his back hit the wall.

"You okay, Zadou?"

Jin stood to protect Sierra behind him. After being attacked by the group of guys and Yuuya, Sierra's nicely combed hair had become tangled while her pretty clothes were speckled with dirt and even torn here and there. On the verge of tears, she was gripping her shirt that had the buttons ripped off, making sure to keep herself covered.

Though he had been momentarily stunned by the crash with the wall, Yuuya's face quickly twisted with hatred as he laid eyes upon Jin, baring his fangs and nails as he switched targets and moved in to attack Jin.

"Uwah~!"

Jin was knocked down. Of course, the intention this time was not to kiss the target but to slice open Jin's windpipe with his sharp nails. Jin grabbed both of Yuuya's wrists and desperately tried to stop him.

"Yu...Yuuya? Why would you attack me? Do you resent me that much for littering our dorm room with all those books?"

"It's Majnun's doing. The love this boy has for the girl has turned into jealousy."

Hearing what Alf said, Jin stared at Yuuya in disbelief. His eyes were glowing red."

"You mean he's jealous enough to want to kill me?

"It's because Majnun takes the darker aspects of the human heart and amplifies them several-fold, you see,"

Alf said before grabbing Yuuya's hair from behind and yanking him off of Jin.

"Ugah?!"

While still on the ground, Jin stomped Yuuya in the stomach without giving him any time to defend himself.

"Sorry, Yuuya!"

"Gyah!"

Yuuya gave a beast-like cry as he flew backwards and fell down the stairs. Alf smirked seemingly satisfied while Sierra stared wide-eyed at Jin.

"Y-You're rather strong...for a commoner at least."

"As long as it's one-on-one, I guess."

Jin looked down at Yuuya who lay prone at the base of the stairs.

"Hey Alf, will these guys remember what happened while they were being controlled?"

"No, Majnun's method of controlling people pushes their minds to the depths of their psyche, so it's similar to if the person was simply sleeping. Why do you ask?"

"I'm glad. I think I might've kicked him a bit too hard, so it could've put a strain on our friendship."

"Taking advantage of the desires that are dormant within people's hearts, Majnun manipulates them in a state of madness. Instilling jealousy into those who are in love and the urge to loot into those who are poor, he creates criminals and starts wars. If he isn't stopped, this town will fall into anarchy."

Alf glared up at the top of the stairs. From the base of the stairs, students were noisily making their way up. The sound suddenly reminded Jin of their situation.

"They're coming, so let's go up!"

"W-Wait. I-I always come to school by car, so my endurance is kind of..."

After rushing up the stairs, Sierra's legs were quickly becoming stiff.

"It's just a bit further, hang in there!"

Jin grabbed Sierra's arm and pulled at her encouragingly as he started rushing up the stairs. While blushing at the strength of Jin's hands as he tugged her forcefully along, Sierra nevertheless got angry.

"D-Don't touch me so familiarly, commoner!"

"This isn't the time to be saying such things!"

Acting as the rear guard, Alf continued to blast the oncoming students with extinguisher fluid, keeping them at bay as she continued climbing.

The school had three floors. Nearly up three floors, Jin and the others were only a few steps away from the roof...when the staff residents who had been waiting for them descended upon them.

"Gaahh!"

They were wielding shinai. Alf took the mini extinguisher from her belt and sprayed them in the face.

"Damn, this is the last of the extinguishers."

The staff residents were taken care of, but the students who had recovered were coming up the stairs behind them.

"Let's just hurry and go up!"

Jin rushed up the stairs towards the roof. Sierra and Alf followed after him.

On the rooftop, Ukyou sensed their approach and calmly turned around. With a thud, the iron door that led from the stairs to the roof slammed open.

"...So you made it."

Ukyou gave a devilish smile and licked his blade. Sierra was hiding behind Jin's back, while Alf closed the door and bolted it shut. The students chasing them beat on the door, the sound echoing eerily.

"Dorm head! Just what in the world are you up to?"

Jin yelled sharply, but then Alf interjected.

"He's not the dorm head. He's Majnun."

"You said the same thing earlier, but what does that mean?"

"A Daemon. From the Ark of the Covenant...He's one of of the Daemons of the Ark.

"You know, you're as confusing as a computer manual. "

"Basically, this guy has been possessed and lost his sanity."

"So even a sensible guy like the dorm head can be possessed so easily?"

Hearing that, Ukyou...no, the Daemon possessing Ukyou laughed scoffingly.

"*This* man, sensible? Rather than sensible, I'd say he's a lump of vanity, cowardice, and inferiority complexes. He's madly in love with that girl, yet he valued his pride and was too afraid of becoming a laughingstock if rejected to say it clearly, but on the other hand, while other men had given up on her as a prize beyond their reach and never confessed, he had the confidence that he would be accepted by her...He gave her a love letter, but it was thrown away without even being read."

"How cruel. I can't believe how self-important you are, Zadou."

"I guess you reap what you sow, huh."

Being accused simultaneously by both Jin and Alf, Sierra hastily objected,

"I wouldn't do that sort of thing! I'm quite sure that I maintain proper appearances, after all!"

"What a frank declaration."

Jin remembered back to the first day when Sierra had come to his room that Yuuya had said "The dorm head's been in a bad mood recently, so you better prepare for the worst". Ukyou must have been in a bad mood because he had been rejected by Sierra.

But...Sierra, who really did maintain her appearance to others, wouldn't have just gone and thrown away a love letter, Jin thought. So, couldn't it be Ukyou made a mistake and was bearing this grudge for no reason? Just to make sure, Jin asked the Daemon.

"When you say love letter, exactly what did he give her?"

"Following old customs of the nobles from the Heian period, he wrote a poem, and together with a tree branch , he placed it into her shoe rack. It was a tachibana branch, to make it easy to understand who it was from based on the scent."

"A tachibana branch?"

Hearing that, Sierra realized. A bit shocked, she covered her mouth.

"So then, the caterpillar that I thought was left by someone who hated me was actually...?"

"Ahh, I get it. Tachibana is a citrus plant after all, so there might have been a swallowtail larvae stuck to it, right?"

"No one would normally think that was a love letter! There's no helping that it was thrown away!"

"Yeah, really...it fits with his tastes, but I don't think such a thing would be generally well known."

"A man so madly in love such as this one would not pay attention to such things. Not to mention that to this day, he has never dated a woman and never had even much interest before."

Ukyou...or rather, Majnun who was inhabiting Ukyou pointed at himself and smiled coldly.

"With his pride crushed, his love turned to vengefulness and jealousy. Such weakness of the heart made it so very easy for me to invade."

"By pride...do you mean not reading his letter? But it's not like I actually rejected him or anything!"

"He was in love, but in the end, he lost his composure. He was convinced that his entire existence had been refuted, and so his mind was filled only with thoughts of how to make you acknowledge him. And eventually with thoughts of how to get the lamp, and thus obtain you as well."

"It's impossible to make someone return your love by force, you'd just be wasting your time. Besides, bought love is fake!"

As Sierra declared while pointing her finger accusingly , Jin muttered to her.

"Isn't that basically what I said to your father before?"

"S-Shut up! It's a common enough saying!"

"We're not talking about copyright infringement here, you know."

"He can no longer tell the difference between real love and false love...This is my Daemonic ability. Moonlight that drives the heart into lunacy, the power of Majnun."

"You're really the worst. So, that's how you Daemons of the Ark go about corrupting humans, huh."

Alf faced Ukyou and taunted him, gesturing with her index finger for him to come.

"Get out of that boy! I'm going to eat you!"

"Eat?...So then, were you really not trying to eat me before?"

"My family line treats Daemons as a primary form of sustenance. Similar to how you are raising the power of the Genie of the Lamp, I have to hunt and eat Deamons, not only to level up, but also to avoid starvation. This attribute is also passed on to the next generation, so rather than porridge, I've been weaned on some low level Daemons brought here by my parents."

"Exactly how...do you eat them?"

"Well, it's not with sugar and soy sauce, that's for sure. Why don't you try saying "Abracadabra"?"

Just then, Ukyou brandished his sword.

"As if I'd let you! Al-Kamar!"

The blade reflected the moonlight. A bluish white light ran along the sword's edge, then flying from the tip, it shot towards them like a bullet in the form of a spinning crescent.

"Look out!"

Jin and the others ducked behind the structure housing the staircase they had come up from earlier. Striking the door with a tumultuous crash, the bluish white crescent crashed into the iron door, bending it inward. The deflected blade slipped past the obstruction and ran into the concrete railing that surrounded the rooftop. The railing broke and fragments were sent flying .

"Kyahh!"

Sierra covered her head instinctively while Jin immediately moved to protect her, covering her back.

"Are you alright?"

"Y-Yeah..."

The determined look in Jin's eyes made Sierra's heart race. While peeking at Ukyou from the safety of the staircase housing, Alf spoke to Jin.

"Rather than do it himself, Majnun is a good-for-nothing Daemon who possesses people's hearts and makes them do the dirty work for him. He's scared of being eaten by me, so he'll probably avoid close-range combat. For now, just hurry up and say Abracadabra."

"I don't want to say any more dumb incantations like ' Chichinpuipui' or 'Abracadabra'!"

"How rude! Abracadabra is the name of one of the old gods of Mesopotamian society, and Chichinpuipui is derived from Chijinbuyuu. It's not like it's all just nonsense or something."

"Chijinbuyuu?"

"Wisdom, benevolence, might, and courage. The four traits valued in a ruler."

"The magic lamp is from the Middle East, isn't it? So why would it have a Japanese incantation?"

Sierra asked with a bit of doubt. Mindful of Ukyou's movements, Alf replied somewhat impatiently.

"Rather than Japanese, it's derived from Chinese characters. The Confucian Virtues of benevolence, justice, courtesy, and wisdom appear in the Analects of Confucius, you know? So well, Chijinbuyuu goes along the same lines. The magic lamp was in China, after all."

"Isn't it an Arabian story though?"

"Have you never read Arabian Nights? Aladdin's story takes place in China, and the magic lamp was buried in China too."

"I'm too influenced by the animated version, so I can only think of it as a Middle Eastern story."

"For three thousand years from the time of King Solomon, it was carried along the Silk Road until it reached China. In that time, the incantation also changed, going from Arabian to Chinese."

"I see...Then, from the time that Arabian Nights was written, it took another thousand years to reach Japan, right? Maybe the same holds true for Solomon's treasure as well?"

Jin murmured, then Alf nodded.

"It's likely. A thousand years ago, the treasure was brought to China...Also, the Clavicle of Solomon must have come with the lamp. The Clavicle of Solomon is necessary to seal the Daemons after all."

"Ahh, I get it. So there's a book for controlling Daemons?"

"That's not it. It's not a book, it's..."

Alf tried to say something, but just then, another flying crescent came at Jin and the others. The three of them cried out, clutching their heads and huddling down. As the crescent rapidly sliced into the wall, Alf yelled.

"He's just striking out blindly, but he'll hit us eventually! Hurry up and say the incantation!"

"At the very least, can't it be a somewhat cooler incantation..."

"Now's not the time to be complaining about that sort of thing, you cheeky commoner! I don't completely get it, but just do as she says, that's an order!"

The impatient Sierra grabbed him by the collar and shook him. Jin replied as his head practically rattled.

"J-Just why are you even giving orders anyway! Fine, whatever, Abracadabra!"

At his limit, Jin had shouted. Ukyou furrowed his brow.

"Damn...!"

As he watched Alf glow silver and shrink thinner and thinner, a silver sword appeared and dropped to the ground. Surprised, Jin peered about.

"A-Alf? Where'd you go?"

"You really are quite dense, aren't you? I'm right here!"

An echoing voice could be heard from the sword. Jin picked it up. The sword was light enough that he could even wield it with one hand. Unable to understand exactly what was going on, Jin was in a state of shock.

"Hey now, instead of spacing out, fight! I'll be guiding you, so don't worry!"

The sword spoke with Alf's voice. Just then, the shadow cast upon the rooftop floor by the protruding stairwell structure was joined by another shadow. Looking up, Jin saw Ukyou standing on top of it. With sword in hand, Ukyou leapt at him.

"Tch, so you've gotten the Shamshir now, have you! But, as you are now, I'm not afraid!"

Jin swiftly parried the sword with the shamshir. Both the Japanese katana and the shamshir had curved blades and were the type used for downward slashes. The sword spoke to Jin.

"Once I'm in this form, I can't turn back until I eat an Ark Daemon. If you're defeated, 'Alf' will be gone forever ."

"T-That's quite a load of responsibility! In that case, you really should have chosen a kendo-club member or something."

"An ordinary human can't hope to defeat an Ark Daemon, you know."

"But I am an ordinary human. I've only ever swung a blade in kendo class, and only ..."

"It'll be okay. I'm backing you up, so let's take him down."

"But still, the dorm head is no pushover!"

"I'll have you know, my intuition is very accurate."

"What do you mean 'intuition'?"

"I mean knowing the Clavicle of Solomon's whereabouts."

"I-Is now really the time to be talking about archaeology texts?!"

"Anyway, do your best. The Genie level of the sword will only go up if I eat Ark Daemons, you know."

"You're kind of like a parasite, aren't you?"

"You should think more before you say such things to a girl!"

Jin was somehow able to fend off Ukyou's pressing attacks. The sword was maneuvering Jin's body to fight for him, which is why he could afford to banter with her, but as the opponent was Ukyou, the captain of the kendo club, that the Daemon was possessing, there was still an overwhelming difference in their abilities. It took all he had just to defend himself from Ukyou's strikes, each parry sending sparks flying and a distinctly metallic ring. Sierra held her hands crossed over her heart, watching on with her heart aflutter.

"Do your best, commoner! Beat that guy black and blue!"

"Don't just say whatever, help me out here."

"You want me to wash something?"

"So useless!"

Despite his efforts, Jin was losing out to Ukyou's offensive and being pushed back. Ukyou smirked and prepared to swing his sword down heavily.

"As I thought, as inexperienced with the sword as you are right now, I have nothing to fear! Go ahead and die!"

"Gah...!"

Jin tried to intercept, but the sword had become extremely heavy and wouldn't budge. Considering it was the sentient sword that moved its owner to fight, would that mean if it succumbed to fear that it would lose its strength and become even worse than useless...Jin wondered, noticing the dual nature of the weapon for the first time.

"What the heck, Alf, you have to move! What are you doing?!"

Jin shouted out in desperation, but the sword remained absolutely silent.

"Die!"

Ukyou's sword descended upon him. An odd noise resounded in the moonlit night, the sound of the blade striking something solid. Blood splattered. Sierra stood in shock.

"N, no way...!"

Struck on the left side of his collar, Jin spouted blood and collapsed. From Sierra's perspective, everything seemed to be happening in slow motion.

"Commoner!"

Sierra ran to Jin's side. As blood continued to flow freely from his wound, his face was extremely pale and he wasn't moving at all. Sierra shook him desperately and cried out.

"Commoner, wake up! It was your fault that the lamp was stolen, you know, so I won't forgive you if you just abandon your responsibility and die on me! I simply won't allow it!"

Sierra continued to shake him and even slapped him in the face a few times, but realizing that nothing would help, she leaned over him and cried out tearfully.

"It's all my fault! Because I'm the one who asked you to get back the lamp!"

"Kukuku...what an unworthy fellow."

Ukyou stood behind her. Her eyes filled with tears, Sierra turned to face him.

"You demon!"

"You're not incorrect in calling me that. I am an Ark Daemon after all."

Ukyou took out the Magic Lamp that he had tucked away earlier. Sierra sharply yelled.

"How did you even get your hands on the lamp?!"

"I caught scent of the lamp, so I had been searching that room for quite some time. The place was full of junk so I hadn't been able to find it, but it was easy once the place was cleaned out..."

"You were searching?"

"You saw me there, saying I was disgusting. That was quite rude."

After hearing that, Sierra was surprised.

"That spider, that was you?"

She felt a certain sense of calm. Despite the situation, instead of feeling afraid of the enemy who was standing nearby, knowing for certain that Jin hadn't just handed the lamp to someone else made her feel relieved.

"Huh, so I really should have killed you after all. Talking about useful insects, what nonsense. When it comes to exterminating bugs, I'd rather buy insecticide than rely on spiders. Really now, commoners are so stingy!"

"Looks like I win, Zadou Sierra. I have no use for you any longer. Why not become my slave for eternity... rather than that pitiful boy, wouldn't I be a better master? "

Ukyou was just about to rub the lamp. But then, like a spring, Sierra leapt at him and snatched back the lamp. Caught completely off guard by Sierra's sudden actions, Ukyou faltered for a moment. In that moment, Sierra took the lamp in both hands, slid head-first over to the collapsed Jin, and made him rub the lamp.

"Shi..."

Ukyou covered his face with his arm. A purple smoke erupted from the lamp and from within that haze, Sierra appeared dressed in her maid's uniform.

"You demon, it's a million years too early for you to even think of becoming my Master! I'll be the one to choose my own master!"

Sierra pulled out her spellbook from within her apron pocket. On the first page, the characters Jsj...or at least characters that looked something like that were written. Ukyou scowled and moved in to attack her.

"Change of plans, guess I'll have to kill you after all!"

"Now how do you read this again...umm..."

In her haste, she couldn't quite remember. She was slashed at with Ukyou's sword, but while crying out ' kyah!', she was able to use the magic lamp to deflect the strike. It clanged as it was hit.

"How impudent! This time I'll..."

Ukyou tried again, swinging once more. Just as the blade came within five centimeters of Sierra's head, the words suddenly clicked in her mind.

"Ah, I remember now...Lammul!"

After she uttered the phrase, a noisy billowing gust assaulted the rooftop. Sand carried by the wind was making a rough sound and wrapped about Ukyou. Startled by her own ability, Sierra stood in shock as her hair was fluttered about by the wind.

"A-Amazing...I was really able to use magic...!"

Unaware of what sort of effect the Lammul spell might have, she was a bit worried, but it seemed to have worked on him for the time being. Ukyou fell face-first where he stood, startling her.

"D-Did I kill him?"

Her heart racing, Sierra carefully approached him to check whether or not he was still alive.

"Ooh~"

"Ah, so he's just sleeping."

Sierra clutched her chest in relief. Lightly snoring, Ukyou seemed to be sleeping like a baby. Just then, there came a bluish white smoke from Ukyou's back.

"W-What is this?"

Startled, Sierra backed away. Drifting about the darkness, the bluish white smoke took shape, turning into what looked like a sea anemone about five meters in diameter with hundreds of tentacles and eyes. Feeling rather creeped out, Sierra had goosebumps all over.

"Is...Is this Majnun's true form?"

"You think you're so clever. As if you really could have figured that immobilizing the host would render me unable to fight."

It was an odd hoarse voice. In fact, Lammul was the only spell she knew and she didn't even know what sort of effect it would have, so it really was just coincidental that it worked, but deciding to bluff, Sierra shouted.

"T-That's right, I did! With my magic, I can beat someone like you in an instant!"

"I didn't think that you had progressed to such magical proficiency already. Well...Then I guess I'll eat you now."

Majnun laughed darkly, descending upon her slowly. Not expecting this turn of events, Sierra started backing away.

"E-Eat me...?"

"Though I avoided Suleiman's ring, I can't just abandon my comrades."

"Suleiman?"

"The king who was a magician, or perhaps I should say, the magician who became king."

"I don't get what you're saying at all! Why do all these hard to understand things keep happening one after another?! I wanted to be a normal girl, I didn't want any of this magic or anything...I don't even need money. I just wanted my mom and dad to stay together with me, that was all!"

But, without magic, there'd be no money, and without money her mother would file for divorce. Sierra was well aware that was the case, so much so that it pained her.

"Fuh...Shall I tell you as your parting gift to the Underworld?"

"Who you calling a maid?!"

Sierra yelled angrily. Majnun's many eyes blinked in surprise at her anger.

"...It seems this era is seeing an excess of comedians. Or maybe she's just an airhead?"

"W-What a rude monster!"

"Suleiman is the Arabic rendition of Solomon. Solomon's ring is capable of sealing us Ark Daemons into the Ark..."

"The Ark?"

"The lost Ark of the Covenant. When Moses led the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt, ten laws were engraved upon the stone tablets the prophet Moses received from

God upon Mount Sinai on the peninsula of Sinai...The Ten Commandments."

Hearing about Moses, Sierra was reminded of what she heard yesterday from Jin behind the gym.

"The temple at the center of Jerusalem, the capital of Israel...David placed the sacred Ark that contained the Ten Commandments that was recovered from the Philistines within Jerusalem Temple, maintaining adherence to the laws. However, after the division of Israel, when the Babylonians destroyed the Jerusalem Temple that was rebuilt by the people of Judah, the Daemons sealed within the Ark escaped."

Majnun continued while his tentacles waved. Sierra was standing in a daze. Seeing her stand unable to move even the slightest, Majnun narrowed his eyes and laughed.

"Fufufu...Too scared to even reply, are you? We Daemons are spirits lurking within the human heart, spirits baser than reason. Acting based on instinct would often lead to wicked intentions that exceeded the rules of society...Because of that, God sealed us Daemons into the Ark with the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments.

Upon the Ark's destruction, we were freed...Ten forbidden wrong acts were set loose. Denying the one true God, worshiping false idols, taking the Lord's name in vain, ignoring the Sabbath, forsaking one's mother and father, committing murder, stealing, bearing false witness, committing extortion, and then there's myself, Majnun, representing adultery...It became a paradise where we could spread our control across all the land!"

"Zzz."

"Zzz?"

Majnun looked more closely at Sierra. Her eyes were closed, nodding off.

"Are you sleeping?!"

"No way. I'm really listening to your wonderful story, but it seems like I've become too absorbed, teacher."

"Teacher?"

"Ooh."

"First off, don't reply automatically as if you're in class, even pretending as if you were listening like a proper student! You're not in class, wake up!"

Majnun waved his tentacles. The ends that were like sucker pads clung to Sierra's head, shaking her. Sierra opened her eyes, startled awake.

"Huh, I guess I just dozed off."

"You have some nerve. And here I was giving you such a nice parting gift..."

Just then, Sierra heard a familiar voice come from somewhere.

"Well then, I'll take your offer, so tell me where you guys are from, will you? And where's the Ark?"

Confused, Sierra started looking about. Irritated, Majnun's many eyelids were twitching.

"Now see here. What's with you asking someone something and then suddenly turning your back on them , just how were you raised?"

"Wait, that wasn't me..."

"Now that I've decided to kill you instead of capturing you, I did want to give you that parting gift, but unfortunately, I don't know their locations either. If I had , this would have been much easier...But it'll just have to be like this."

Majnun's countless eyes glowed bluish white. A high-pitched sound started to echo within Sierra's mind. Her head felt like it was going to split in half.

"Kyahhh~!!"

Wriggling like a garden hose, its tentacles wrapped around Sierra's body. The tentacles creeped over her still undeveloped chest, groped her hips, and firmly gripped her slender arms and fair legs. Trying to remove its grip around her neck, Sierra struggled, but she was slowly being strangled in an ever tightening grip. Desperately flailing just to breathe, she cried out falteringly.

"S...Stop, you monster!"

"Even now, you want to give orders? Seems you don't understand the predicament of your situation. I wonder if you'd shut up if I tore you limb from limb?"

Holding her by her wrists and ankles, it stretched her apart firmly. It was almost as if Sierra was being crucified . Her joints creaked, her limbs felt as if they really were going to be torn off. The fierce pain made Sierra raise her face to the sky and cry out in agony. Yet her pained cry could not be clearly voiced.

Just then, a silverish light cut through the darkness. With a heavy sound, a sword struck its target.

"Gryahh!"

Slashed rather deeply down the middle, Majnun let out a dreadful cry. Spewing violet blood, its tentacles writhed about in pain. The tentacles holding Sierra's head removed their grasp, and there stood the person holding the sword.

That is, Jin was standing there. With a diagonal tear from earlier, his clothes were in poor shape. He was even still bleeding, but he at least seemed to be doing okay.

"Commoner!"

Her eyes shining brightly, Sierra rushed to Jin's side and in sheer delight, hugged him from behind. Unused

to such open displays of glee and tenderness, Jin was taken somewhat aback.

"So you were still alive, huh! How is your wound so much better?"

"Sorry I'm late in rescuing you, but Alf stopped and... You didn't crack your skull or something, did you?"

Jin touched her head. Blushing bright red, Sierra stepped back hastily.

"D, d, don't touch me so familiarly, you commoner!"

"Good. If you can show that sort of irritation, then it seems like you're fine."

"I don't want you to misunderstand, so I'll tell you now, I wasn't worried about you even a bit, okay! Not at all!"

Still blushing, Sierra yelled almost desperately. With a dispirited look, Jin sighed.

"Since it doesn't know where the Ark is, we have no more use for it. Okay Jin, you can do it now!"

Alf declared mercilessly. Just then Sierra realized that it was Alf who had pretended to be her earlier.

"You...Alf or whatever your name was! Were you planning on just watching me die just so you could find out where the Ark was?"

"I was just adding a bit of spice into the everyday tedium of a pampered princess."

"Just what about getting my head blown off counts as ' a bit of spice', huh?!"

"So you were only...pretending that you were dead!"

Majnun managed to yell despite his wound.

"Hey, I'm the one who let you go thinking you were a beneficial creature, and this is how you repay the favor? I guess even amongst spiders there are those like the redback variety that you just have to kill!"

Jin brought his clenched right hand towards Majnun. On his middle finger, a golden ring engraved with the star of David was glowing. As fluid continued to drip

from its body, Majnun's hundreds of eyes opened wide. All its eyes swelled as if about to explode as it gazed at the dazzling light.

"But, but the Ring was just recently awakened, so there's no reason I should lose! With all the desire from those humans who sought after that girl fueling me, I can't possibly lose to novices like you!"

Majnun suddenly lashed out with his tentacles, assaulting Jin like a storm. As Sierra screamed behind him, Jin firmly held his ground.

"Get back, I'll handle this. Or, actually, I guess Alf will. "

"Don't be too careless, 'cause in the end, I'll need your power after all!"

"You're quite cheeky for a commoner! What's with that ring anyway!"

"The ring was inside of the lump on Jin's collar. It seems that along with the lamp, the ring had also been amidst that pile of books that was in his dorm room. Aware that Majnun was nearby, it burrowed and hid inside of Jin's body. The ring was like a parasite, and so

Jin got the power of the ring...that's also why he was able to undo the seal of the lamp."

"If it was a parasite, I should go to a hospital. So anyway, that must be why when the dorm head struck me, the cut wasn't really that deep because the blade hit the ring. Hey wait, Alf, I bet you let him slice me open on purpose, didn't you."

Glancing down at the golden ring, Jin muttered rather bitterly.

"If I had asked you to let me perform surgery on you to get it out, there's no way you would have believed me and accepted, right?"

"Well, yeah, that's right, there was no way I'd have let you cut into me."

"Solomon's ring, which can seal all manners of things, has stronger magical power than an Ark Daemon, so I'd bet as its host, you must taste quite good yourself."

"Hey you! You're still thinking about eating me, aren't you!"

"Oopsies. Never mind, never mind, just forget all that, since without the owner of the ring, there'd be no one to wield me and I wouldn't be able to eat anymore, after all. "

Alf spoke off-handedly, then moved his body to face him against Majnun.

"As long as you've got it, all the free Ark Daemons will come for the ring to avoid being sealed away. In short, you have to do your best and fight them all."

"Oh man, why me."

"You can't stop my hundreds of tentacles, no matter what kind of sword you've got! I'll easily crush a weak human like you!"

Mobilizing all his tentacles at once, Majnun prepared to wrap itself around Jin.

Jin sliced horizontally at the approaching tentacles. Being controlled by Alf, Jin's movements were so swift and precise, he couldn't help but gulp.

"It'd be nice if you could help me like this in kendo class."

"Don't distract me. Focus and synchronize yourself with me!"

Jin's ring glowed vividly. Surprised, he unthinkingly exclaimed.

"W...What is this?"

The ring unpeeled like a banana, becoming a golden layer that enveloped Jin's hand. Joining with the sword, it spread along his forearm to become a gauntlet, hardening into an armor and continuing along his upper arm and wrapping his right shoulder, expanding into a metallic wing. The wing curved slightly as if to protect Jin, and when the attacking feelers struck it, they burst with a pop.

"Gahhhh!!"

Majnun shrieked. Jin stared dumbfoundedly at his right hand that was now covered in a golden metal. The sword that had merged with his hand had turned golden as it was also enveloped by the ring, and to its left and right, three metal blades extruded like wings. Alf sounded quite pleased.

"Amazing, it's even greater than I thought! So this is the power of the ring!"

"D...Damnittt~!"

Turning desperate, Majnun started spinning and rushed forward. Manipulating the still shocked Jin, Alf thrust herself forward.

"What an idiot! The power of the ring won't be defeated by strength alone! Jin, use the sealing incantation!"

"Sealing incantation?"

Suddenly told something like that, Jin was confused.

"Concentrate on the ring. Just like you synchronized with me, do it with the ring!"

"You keep saying so many difficult things."

"As if I'd let you win, I'll destroy you!"

Majnun had drawn right up to Jin. With all the tension of the moment, Jin felt his pores contract...And just then, as naturally as breathing, his mouth uttered an incantation involuntarily.

"Ol sonuf vaoresaji! I reign over ye!"

And with that Jin and his sword started glowing, numerous shards of light scattering about him and spiraling towards the heavens. His sword branched into two and turned into an enormous maw lined with sharp teeth that engulfed Majnun.

"Gyahhh!"

Majnun let out a final pained death cry. After it had finished swallowing Majnun, the sword returned to its original size. Subsequently, in a puff of smoke, the sword reverted back into Alf. There was just a slight swell to Alf's slender stomach.

"Hmm. The essence of Majnun the devil of adultery, it had quite a unique flavor I think.

She rubbed her belly looking rather satisfied. Jin's armor had also reverted to its original ring form at the same time that Alf reappeared. Jin touched his mouth in disbelief.

"...How, exactly did that incantation come from my mouth all of a sudden?"

"Humans use only 5% of their brains as their actual consciousness. The other 95% remains as the subconscious...the excess mental power remaining dormant. The instance of stress from Majnun's assault led to a temporary awakening or sorts."

"Incredible. I'm more sleepy after that one instant than when I'm in class."

"If you want to freely use such brain power, you'd have to gain control of your subconscious. They use the method of Zen for that sort of thing in Japan, right?"

Sierra let out a sigh and plopped down on the ground where she stood.

"...So it is dead, right?"

"Seems that way."

Jin also wasn't entirely sure. Alf smiled and gave a thumbs up.

"Without the sealing ring, I could only eat weak demons on my own...I should be quite full for a while."

"But, turns out the Clavicle of Solomon isn't a book but a key...Solomon's ring, huh. And here I had thought that it was a text, what with all I've read about it."

"Maybe it was done by the demagogues to throw the Ark Daemons off the trail. Clavicle and key sound kind of similar anyway.

Alf spoke while touching Jin's collarbone where the blood was still in the process of clotting.

"In short, not just anyone can become the master of the magic lamp. In the story of Aladdin and the Magic Lamp, he must have rubbed the lamp with the ring in order to call out the genie."

"So then whoever has the ring can control the Genie of the Lamp?"

"Yep. If they possessed the ring, then even an Ark Daemon could do it."

"N, no way, I refuse to be a slave to those monsters!"

Sierra shook her head defiantly from side to side. Alf replied to her.

"But in other words, even if some ordinary person stole the lamp and tried to use it, they wouldn't be able to summon you. That's why after hundreds of years, your ancestors were able to move about without being called upon."

"So if I hadn't become a host to the ring, then I wouldn't have to have gone through all of this...?"

Jin sighed mournfully. The sound irritated Sierra.

"You're just a commoner, yet you would dare complain about having someone as wonderful as I am as your servant?"

"Haa, well I did get my room cleaned up a lot faster."

About at the end of his rope, Jin was holding his head in his hands. Sierra came up with a sudden realization and asked him a question.

"Oh hey, isn't Solomon's ring part of Solomon's treasure? That's what your parents are searching for right ? So why don't you call them? This could prove that the treasure is in Japan after all."

"I can't. I haven't been able to reach them by phone at all. For adults, they're rather flaky."

Jin didn't hesitate to speak harshly of them. However, even though he might not have been completely aware of it himself, acting aloof, Jin really must have been rather lonely...As someone familiar with wanting family affection, Sierra could relate. With an unusual tenderness , Sierra spoke to him.

"It's okay, you'll be able to talk to them soon. If not, you can use one of my family's employees to send them a message, okay?"

"So even you can be kind sometimes, huh."

"Well, why don't you show me lots of gratitude and rub my head now please."

"So that's all it was, after all!"

Jin pressed his forehead, amazed. As if she were trying to run him over, Sierra pushed closer to him.

"Of course, why else did you think someone like me would be helping a commoner like you?!"

"Helping, you say...Aren't you the one who'd be in trouble if the lamp got stolen?"

"Putting it that way is a sophism!"

"There must be some other completely different meaning to the word 'sophism' than the one I know then. "

"Anyway, just listen to what I tell you to do! Now rub my head!"

Speaking firmly, Sierra pressed her finger into Jin's chest like a drill. Bowing to Sierra's forcefulness, Jin sighed.

"I take back what I said earlier. You don't have a single redeeming feature."

"Whatever, just rub my head! Really, I can't stand to have my head rubbed by a commoner like you, so you should by grateful that I'm even allowing you the privilege of doing so!"

"Your logic is so out there, I'm not even going to try to argue with you."

Suffering from a headache, Jin placed his hand on Sierra's head and unwillingly uttered the still unfamiliar incantation.

"Chichinpuipui."

Sierra became engulfed in a silver glow. Her long hair fluttered and Sierra felt the satisfaction gauge rise, but it only went up just a bit.

"Ah...huh?"

Her fluttering hair returned to its normal place and the glow eventually died. She quickly checked her magic book, but there weren't any new spells to be found. Angry, Sierra snapped at Jin.

"Hey! I worked so hard, so what's up with the gauge's increase?! Show some more gratitude!"

"Not really. The one who worked the hardest was Jin, so I think even that amount of gratitude is quite something, considering..."

Alf muttered quietly in surprise. Noticing that Ukyou had started to move slightly while still collapsed on the rooftop, Jin spoke to the other two.

"If we're done here, we should go. The dorm head's such a serious guy, who knows what he'll say if he finds me in the middle of the night here together with girls. I won't have anywhere to go if I'm kicked out of the dorm, you know."

"What do you mean 'serious'?! He tried to make me his slave, didn't he?"

Sierra puffed up her cheeks. Alf chidingly replied.

"That's only because he was possessed by Majnun. He's back to normal now."

"That's the Japanese way of ignoring drunken antics. In that case, you're just a commoner who doesn't accept globalization!"

"It's only because he likes you that he was taken over by Majnun. Just forgive him already."

Just when things had calmed down, Sierra snapped at him like a razor's edge.

"Hey you, don't you feel mortified?"

"Huh? Why would I?"

"You're supposed to be my master! Your servant was taken by someone else, you know? Didn't it irritate you? Didn't you think 'Don't lay a hand on my servant!' or something like that?"

"But, it's not like I'm really your master, and you're not really my servant, right? You don't call me Master, and you're always giving me orders."

Jin's accurate rebuttal left Sierra unable to reply. Left without a valid argument, Sierra shouted angrily.

"That's that and this's this!"

"What's what?"

"Whatever! Act a bit more regretful, or else I'll take the ring and make someone else my master! What do you think of that, hm?!"

"That'd probably be for the best actually. I'll take off the ring now, okay?"

Completely serious, Jin was about to remove it, making Sierra thoroughly indignant. Picking up the magic lamp that had fallen on the floor, she pushed it on Jin.

"W-Well there's only a bit more until I reach the next level, so do your duty and call me again tomorrow! After all this trouble there's no way I'm going back to level zero !"

After saying her bit, Sierra was enveloped by purple smoke and disappeared back through the lamp.

"Hey, wait just a minute! Don't impose whenever you want, it's annoying!"

"Hmm, looks like you don't have a choice. Think of it as destiny and accept it."

Alf laughed heartlessly. Jin scowled at her.

"This isn't my problem! So why do I have to get involved?!"

"I guess it's because you like archaeology? It even seems like you might be better at it than your parents."

Alf spoke while staring at him with a serious face.

"History repeats itself...or so they say. In that case, to study the past is to know the future, right?"

"Hm, maybe...There are times when it mimics the past."

"In other words, archaeologists are like prophets. So being chosen by the ring...You're like a prophet."

"Me, a prophet?"

He blinked at such an unexpected term. Alf nodded firmly.

"I told you before that the 'Clavicle' of Clavicle of Solomon is meant to be Key, right? It's the key that seals or frees the genie of the lamp within the magic lamp... That's the ring of Solomon. That Aladdin would be chosen as the user was already predetermined. That he would be the one to dig out the buried lamp. In other words, the ring's master won't be just anyone."

"...Then, you're saying I was also chosen by the ring?"

"That's right. It wasn't in your room by chance, but by a forgone destiny. However, now that the ring has revealed itself, if it should be stolen, then that person would become the ring's new master. The Ark Daemons will be coming for the ring, and if one should get their hands on the ring, it could very well mean the end of the world, Jin."

Jin could suddenly feel a heavy responsibility press upon him, thinking how he had been chosen. And also... according to Arabian Nights, a thousand years ago the ring had come to China from the west and even before that the magic lamp had already made it to China and been buried underground, so...

"Just like Solomon's treasure, the lost ark could also be in Japan, couldn't it?"

"Even I don't know that much. If I could find the Ark, I bet I could have my pick of tasty Ark Daemons though."

"So you don't know, huh..."

Jin sighed disappointedly. Alf patted him on the shoulder.

"Well, until we find the Ark that's capable of sealing all demons, we'll just have to watch out for any Ark Daemons. At the very least, be mindful of the lamp and the ring. The Ark Daemons will be trying to kill off the descendants of the magic lamp, or else even try to make them their slaves."

"Even if they were able to make that girl a slave, they wouldn't be able to make full use of her anyway."

"Right now she can only use pitiful magic, but...Her ancestors simply passed down the book with spells already written in it and didn't gain any levels to add to

it. If she's able fill the book up to the last page, then she could very well wield enough magical power to level a nation."

Jin could only gulp in response to Alf's suggestion. Someone as selfish as Sierra having that kind of ridiculous amount of power...The phrase "Genie" (evil god) would be quite apt, considering her extremely troublesome personality, and then to add to it the power to shake the world, he could just imagine what sort of trouble that could spell.

"If that was to happen, then she'd make herself an empress and rule over Japan."

"Well, the Ark Daemons are seeking to either possess her or kill her, most likely. The Genie of the Lamp may be a double-edged sword to both humans and Ark Daemons alike."

"So because I've found the Genie of the Lamp, they'll be coming to attack seriously then...?"

"That's what I said. To prevent the destruction of the world, you must make sure that no one else gets their hands on her, 'kay?"

"Hmph. If those guys really want her so bad, I'm perfectly willing to wave bye-bye to that troublesome girl ."

Jin turned his back. Alf smirked.

"You know, I don't think that'll happen."

"...Hm, maybe so. The fate of the world depends on her, anyway."

As Jin gave a helpless sigh with a grave expression on his face, Alf narrowed her eyes and gave him a sidelong glance that seemed to have some subtle meaning.

"Nah, I think on a personal level, it's simply not something you could control."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Alright then, I think I'll head home now too."

Ignoring Jin's question, Alf opened the deformed iron door to the stairs and started making her way down. Left unanswered, Jin had an odd feeling in his chest.

"Thanks for tonight's meal, make sure to let me eat more Ark Daemons in the future as well, 'kay? I'll give you ten coupons for meals at our family restaurant for each one...Hm, but Solomon's ring looks pretty tasty too though."

"I'd really be better off if I didn't have to deal with a woman like you!"

Jin faced Alf's back and shouted hysterically.

The silverish moon in the sky shone coldly, completely oblivious to anything that had happened. The story had been passed down since long ago in Persia about Majnun who, using the light of the moon, would sneak into people's hearts. The despair of a hopeless longing, and yet unwilling to give up, the person would be driven to lunacy.

"Yuuya, and even the dorm head, what exactly about Zadou drove them to it..."

Jin asked of the moon. An image of the conceited, selfish, and self-centered Sierra danced around in his head. And also...her smiling face when she successfully cooked the omelette, and her teary-eyed expression of

relief when she realized that he was still alive after being sliced by Ukyou.

Jin didn't question any further. It was as if the moonlight could pierce to the deepest reaches of a person's heart. Staring at the moon, he couldn't help but feel that even he was being changed oddly by the moon.

As if running from the moon's gaze, Jin departed from the rooftop.

No different than usual, the night passed into morning .

Jin arrived at school and, with a somewhat queasy expression on his face, approached Yuuya who was seated at his desk. Jin greeted him even while his heart beat nervously.

"Morning Yuuya. Where'd you go last night?"

Yuuya turned around and looked up, his face swollen and purple. Jin drew back in shock. As he had thought,

he must've used just a bit too much force...Jin thought in reflection.

"Jin, I think I might be a sleepwalker."

Looking tired, Yuuya held his hand to his forehead. There was a large bump there that must have come from when he fell down the stairs.

"This morning, I was lying down at the foot of the stairs when I woke up...I was even in my school uniform. I don't really remember what happened after school yesterday. And my entire body hurts..."

"Isn't that from studying too much? You know, because sometimes your brain shorts out or something."

Jin tried to convince him while smiling. Yuuya still looked rather doubtful.

"What about you, what's with your shoulder?"

Yuuya reached out and touched Jin's left shoulder. The wound from yesterday had been treated and wrapped in gauze, but perhaps it had reopened on the trek to school, because now his shirt was slightly stained with blood. Jin hastily covered the bloody spot with his jacket.

"Oh, that's just from the lump."

"Maybe you're also injuring yourself while sleepwalking? Even the dorm head did, you know. Could there be such a thing as mass sleepwalking, 'cause this is really weird. Dozens of people were collapsed in the gym and the courtyard, covered in extinguishing foam."

"Well, it was a full moon last night. They do say strange things happen on the night of a full moon, right?"

"You mean like werewolves and fish spawning?...Well, I guess they do say that."

Jin relaxed as Yuuya seemed to be buying it.

If the existence of the Ark Daemons was made public, there was the possibility that people with bad intentions might try to seek them out. That's what Alf had told him when she called him afterwards. Solomon had used the sealed demons to gain prosperity, but after his death, he had sealed the demons back into the Ark and hidden the ring so that no one could abuse the power.

Though Solomon in his great wisdom had been able to control them, the Ark Daemons were still likely too crafty for humanity. In any case, the wisdom of mankind couldn't even keep up with its own overall growth. Depletion of resources, environmental pollution, and persistent strife...Examining the exceedingly large civilization of man, people are leading themselves on a road to extinction that goes beyond simple problems of overpopulation, to where it's as dangerous as when children think of guns as toys.

Well...I'm no different, Jin thought. He can't be sure of just how much power Sierra actually has. As the one who had come into the ring which could call upon her power, he wondered if he would be able to use it responsibly. And, he wondered if he would be able to keep it out of the hands of the Ark Daemons, whose appearances and backgrounds were still unknown to him. Jin was a bit overwhelmed with doubt. As he was lost in thought, Sierra arrived to class.

"Morning everyone."

As always, Sierra radiantly took the center of her classmates' attention. As he had just been thinking about

her, Jin unconsciously stared at her. As soon as she noticed his gaze, she made a slightly perplexed face. Then, almost as if trying to run, she looked away. Jin was baffled and a bit uneasy.

It was annoying when she'd speak as pompously as she pleased, but it was almost all too clear as to what she thinking at least. Now though, as she put on that nice and friendly act, he had no idea what she could be thinking. Until just days before, he wouldn't have paid her any heed, and yet now it was weighing quite heavily on his mind.

That day, Jin ran back to the dormitory.

Honda Satoko was standing in front of the dorm, a book clutched to her chest. Surprised, Jin stopped.

"You're...that library committee member, right?"

"I've brought the Arabian Nights book that senpai was looking for."

Satoko's eyes were generally hidden by her bangs, so he couldn't really make out her expression. Jin knit his brow suspiciously.

"You came here just for that?"

"Yes, just for this."

Satoko's mouth was twisted into a smirkish smile. Jin shivered.

Just then, Ukyou came walking out of the dorm's entrance and called Jin's name.

"Hey, Araki. Come here a sec."

"Ah, coming! Thanks, it seems I'm being called by the dorm head, so..."

Jin took the book from her and turned on his heel. Watching him go, Satoko let out a low laugh.

"Please feel free to ask me anything at any time. As long as it's something within my means, I'll help you with anything. Kukuku..."

"Yeah, I really don't get what's with her going 'kukuku' ..."

With his head tilted in thought, Jin returned to the dorm. Ukyou, wearing his kendo uniform, started

talking while pressing an icepack against the large lump that he probably got from yesterday when his head hit the rooftop floor.

"Araki, don't fraternize with women near the dorm. You'll destroy the public morals we uphold!"

Ukyou was as persistent as ever. Seeing him act so normal, Jin relaxed for the time being.

"My apologies."

"Also, Araki...Did anything happen to you last night?"

"Last night?"

"It's just that, I get the feeling I was sleepwalking. I was carrying my sword and lying on the rooftop, and I even seem to have caught a cold. Your roommate Utada was also collapsed within the school, and...I even have the oddest sensation of meeting with you floating in the back of my mind."

Jin stiffened, shaking his head back and forth.

"I was at the dorm the entire time. I ate dinner there too...Ask anyone and they'll tell you."

"I see. Well, it must've been a dream then. Along with trying to make Zadou into a servant..."

Ukyou muttered practically to himself. It was almost impossible to hear, so Jin asked.

"Did you say something just now?"

"Ah, no. It's nothing."

Ukyou shook his head thoroughly before turning away .

"Having such a shameful dream, I must have some pretty vulgar desires hidden away in my heart somewhere. I must need more discipline...Today, it'll be a thousand swings and ablution, then I'll purify my mind by copying sutras."

"What is that you're muttering about?"

"In any case, for me to have...to have dreamed of Zadou dressed as a maid, it's like the end of the world. ' Moe' shouldn't be used as something so frivolous! In bushido, it's something you'll only find hand in hand with death!"

Ukyou left while in the middle of a verse from the Hagakure. It seemed like he would forget all about last night, but that didn't mean he'd let go of any of his feelings for Sierra.

"So even the dorm head has bouts of idle imagination, huh. What's so good about that spoiled girl anyway?"

From the shadows of a thicket in the dorm's garden, there was someone watching Jin. Hiding while gripping the tree's branches with both hands, a digital camera hung from the neck of the vice-president, Himuro Eriko.

"Araki Jin..."

Eriko's intelligent eyes glinted behind her lenses.

"I don't know exactly what you're hiding, but I'll definitely prove that you brought Zadou into your dorm room. That way, even the president will see that girl's true colors and forget all about her. Then, he'll notice me, the one who has always been by his side...Ufufufu..."

"Sis, what are you doing here? If the dorm head finds you, he'll get angry."

From behind, Eriko's younger brother Keita called out to her, sounding reasonably worried.

Back in his room, Jin sat down at his desk.

Yuuya had said he was worried about sleepwalking and gone to see the school counselor about it, so it seemed he wouldn't be back for a while. He still couldn't reach his parents by phone.

The magic lamp was still inside one of his drawers. Last night he had been thinking that he wouldn't call her out a second time, but...as he considered what Alf had said, they needed to raise Sierra's genie level as much as possible if they wanted to oppose the Ark Daemons.

"I'd rather not have to see that selfish girl, but...Well, it can't be helped I guess."

Jin took the ring out from his shirt pocket and rubbed it against the magic lamp.

Sierra popped out right away dressed in her maid outfit. For some reason, her hair was dripping wet, and her dry uniform was being rained upon. Here and there, shampoo bubbles coated her hair. Her forehead was furrowed angrily. Jin was surprised and took a glance out the window.

"Is it raining?"

"As if! What's with your timing, calling me out when I was taking my daily after-school shower!"

Sierra snarled at him. So, it seemed like he had called her when she was right in the middle of taking a shower. Her long hair was completely drenched, so her dry clothes were becoming wet and at her feet was a pool of water.

"Oh man, it's going to ruin the floor."

"Hey! Are you just going to ignore the bigger problem here?"

"You're the one who told me to summon you, so what's the problem?"

Immediately regretting summoning her, Jin sighed deeply. Sierra grabbed the hem of her skirt and started wringing it out as she yelled.

"I'll call you when I'm available for this, so summon me then!"

"If it's like that, then just which one of us is really calling out the other?"

"I guess I'll have to teach you about masters and servants or you won't understand who's the master."

"Hey wait, I'm the master here!"

After Jin shouted, someone in the neighboring room banged on the wall.

"Araki, if you want to make so much noise by yourself, go do it outside!"

"See? Because of you, people are getting mad again."

Jin glared at her. Sierra was drying her hair with a towel-like bedsheet that had been hanging from the bunked beds. Jin quietly muttered.

"Maybe rich people don't use these, but that's not actually a bath towel."

"Never mind that, hurry up and tell me what you called me for."

"Don't you mean, 'Master, how may I be of service?'!"

Exasperated by the domineering Sierra, Jin rested his forehead against his hand.

"Fine, just go ahead and wipe up the wet floor. Though this scene feels kind of backwards."

"What a mundane task. Isn't there anything more befitting for me, just a bit more flashy or something?"

"Just get to it!"

Jin shouted in irritation. Sierra sharply turned away.

"Fine. It's fine as long as I get it done, right?"

And so, she took the bedsheet that she had been using to dry her hair and started wiping the floor with it.

"Don't use a bedsheet as a towel!"

The moment he yelled, he hesitated. Sierra was on her hands and knees. With the maid uniform's miniskirt, her thighs were clearly visible, but...ah, but that wasn't all. He was pretty sure that just a bit higher, what should have been there, wasn't. Jin became flustered and his face tinged red.

'Ah...That's right, she was in the middle of a shower when I called her. Seeing as how she gets changed into the maid uniform right when she comes out, then...what about her underwear?'

Jin felt a sudden cold sweat overtake him. He wanted to point it out. He just had to. And yet he couldn't. As if there was any way he could.

"T-That's enough, you can stop."

Looking off to the side, Jin quickly spoke. Sierra looked up and stared at him blankly.

"What? You're the one who said to dry the floor."

"It's fine, so go home!"

"It's not fine. I have to raise my genie level or..."

Sierra stood up and scowled at him. Jin was somewhat taken aback.

"...Ah, I know. Since I don't like wiping, there's a better way. Actually, I heard this from my head maid Mary about the essentials of cleaning."

"The essentials of cleaning?"

Jin's eyes were widened with surprise. Sierra looked back at him proudly with her head held sharply upwards . She looked a bit happy even. Sierra was certainly domineering and selfish, but with her fierce competitiveness, she was surprisingly serious about her work as the Genie of the Lamp...Jin was once again reminded of that fact. Whether it was a good thing or not , it was an irrefutable truth.

"Okay, if you get it, then get out of the way! Whatever gets in the way of cleaning, I'm going to crumple and toss in the trash!"

...But, is the abusive tongue really necessary? Jin climbed up to the top of the two beds. Sierra spoke with an energetic air.

"This spell works quite well with cleaning. In other words, the better I remember the magic, the easier it'll be to level up."

"What works well with cleaning?"

"I heard this from Papa. That Lammul in Arabian means sand. Though it's an incantation related to sand, I had no idea that it was a sleep spell..."

"Ah, yeah. The sandman...Makes sense."

"So you know about it?"

"At night, he's a fairy that comes to put children to sleep by placing sand in their eyes, right?"

"Yeah. When I asked Mary, she told me that in medieval Europe there were people who made a living by scrubbing the floors and kitchenware with sand. So, if you use sand to polish the floors, they'll become rea~lly nice and pretty."

Suddenly, Jin got a bad feeling about where this was headed. But, by the time he realized what was coming, it was too late.

"Ah wait, stop!"

"Lammul!"

Holding her spellbook in one hand, Sierra held her index finger up high with gusto and chanted the incantation.

Bringing along a fierce sound, the sandstorm raged within the room. Lighter things were picked up by the wind, the curtains were suddenly coated in sand, his desk was buried, and the bits that hit him in the face stung like being shot with a pellet gun.

"Stop it, you idiot!"

"Who's the idiot! Even though I said I'd clean for you, you're not showing the least bit of gratitude? What a terribly senseless commoner you are!"

"As if I could be grateful for this! Which of us is the senseless one?!"

As Jin yelled, sand flew into his mouth, sticking crunchily in his mouth. Because of that, he found it hard to even speak.

"I don't think there's enough sand. More Lammul!"

"Stop already!"

Jin screamed at the end of his rope. Rather than worry about the Ark Daemons, Sierra could probably destroy the world all on her own. Once again, one of the neighbors pounded heavily on the wall.

"Hey, don't make such a ruckus every single frickin' day!"

The room was already filled up to at least knee level. Sierra stood alone amidst the piled sand. Covering his eyes, Jin coughed up some sand and yelled.

"Zadou, hey, cut it out!"

"Guh."

Sierra, who was still standing in the sand, had her head tilted to the side. Drool hung from her mouth. Even as she stood, she seemed to be sleeping peacefully.

"Don't get put to sleep by your own magic!"

Because Sierra had fallen asleep, there was no way to stop the magic. The sand continued to pile up. It seemed like Jin would be killed off even before the world might be destroyed.

"Just go home, and don't come back!"

Speaking of the Genie of the Lamp, Sierra really fit the bill for a genie (demon god)...Jin was fully aware of that. And, he was the one who was now stuck with that genie. ..Yeah.

"Somebody, please, do something about this girl for meeeee!"

Jin held his head, screaming mournfully as the sandstorm continued to rage.

Author's Notes

I wonder if you all enjoyed this new read. Actually, as an elementary school student I had a (life?) experience with maids. There was this extremely wealthy classmate, a somewhat egotistic girl; I was invited to her birthday party, and at her place there were actually a handful of maids. All of them were around eighteen years old, with cute faces and white aprons, and they handmade the food for the birthday party. And, because they brought each of the dishes out as soon as they were done, each course of the meal was deliciously fresh. And you know, when the maids bring the food to the Ojousama, she doesn't even say "thank you" you know. They don't even make eye contact. I just thought, 'So this is the relationship between an ojousama and her servants', it was a world just like in manga. Also, the high point was that the girl's mother had gone out somewhere as they had agreed to leave everything about the party to the maids! Among the food there was this "Egg Broth Potage ", which was a strange soup. In the Potage Soup, was a runny fresh egg, and I thought, "Wow, so this is what people with money eat! It's like French cuisine!" I can remember being so impressed when I ate it...but to this day, I've never again encountered a dish as unusual as that 'egg soup potage'. Just maybe, the maids who

prepared it may have actually been bad cooks...It's a mystery I wonder about to myself now that I look back on it (haha).

The aspirations, misunderstandings, fantasies, and naivete (naivete?) from my childhood youth have now been realized as part of this work. Well, while there weren't any maid tea houses, the place that satisfied my dreams was the Eikokuya tea shop. It's a shop you can find in Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, Nagoya, and Tokyo. Though it's not like a private estate, it's furnished elegantly, and the aristocratic emblem with its lion, crown, and shield is wonderful as well. More than anything, their uniforms that are like a cross between maid-wear and a nun's outfit is so pretty! It's a simple black one-piece outfit overlaid with a large white lapel. Hair tied neatly with a black hairband (absolutely essential!) and tasteful use of make-up, I felt my heart race whenever they merely came to take my order. Ah, but even though the place presents itself as a tea shop, their hidden specialty is waffles. Crispy on the outside, light and fluffy inside, they're cooked fresh, so you simply must eat them on the spot. Just thinking about the handmade waffles from those cute, elegant, and refined maids makes me thankful to be alive. The point is that freshly made waffles, compared to pancakes, have a more out of the

ordinary feeling to them with a more exotic name to boot . Similar to my previous experience with the potage, I get the feeling of 'So this is a maid's flavor! This is the feeling of a master!'. And it's not even that expensive. It's not like I'm an infiltrator or anything, but I really wanted to drown myself in the feelings of a master! But, they don't greet you with 'welcome home master' (haha).

Namori-sensei, thank you very much for your wonderful illustrations. Sierra's hair looks so soft and pretty, it makes me want to comb it on Mary's behalf (haha).

May 2006, Natsu Midori @the Ritz-Carlton hotel maids ' high ratings.